

The Sending of God's People

*CLOSING HYMN *O Little Town of Bethlehem* #31

*BENEDICTION

*RESPONSE *Emmanuel* See Screens

Emmanuel, Emmanuel, His name is called Emmanuel
God with us, revealed in us, His name is called Emmanuel



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our congregation is now collecting the **Christmas Joy Offering**, which distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. You are invited to consider making a gift to this special offering.

What a wonderful time six of us had at the party for Immigrants on Dec. 13! Most of the 157 attendees live in the North Hill and Cuyahoga Falls area. Thanks again for your generous donations of hats, gloves, etc. plus sweatshirts. We also appreciated the Ohio Living/Rockynol donations of hats and gloves, many of which were hand-sewn. Our New Initiatives group provided over 100 cookies which were consumed very quickly. We all received a quick lesson in Spanish as the program director spoke for the benefit of the people we were serving.

The **Coffee Hour** sheet is out for 2020, running from Jan. 5-May 31. Please sign.

Donated poinsettias can be picked up after the Christmas Eve service or on Dec. 29.

On Tuesday evening, Dec. 24, at 5:30 p.m., we will gather together in worship for our **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**. Please join in celebrating the birth of the Christ Child, Emmanuel, God-with-us.

Many Thanks to the faithful members and friends who contribute to the financial health of New Covenant Community Church. Pledges for 2020 totaled \$113,037 which is about \$5,000 less than last year's pledge campaign.

Acme Community Cashback ends on Dec. 28. You are encouraged to submit receipts ASAP.

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Office Hours Monday – Thursday, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

New Covenant Community Church

Akron, Ohio

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 22, 2019

10:30 a.m.

The Gathering of God's People

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP AND

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Phil and Sue Smith

Reader 1: On the First Sunday of Advent, we lit the candle of hope, waiting in expectation of the One who makes all things new.

Reader 2: On the Second Sunday of Advent, we lit the candle of peace, looking forward to the coming of the Messiah who brings justice, wholeness, and harmony to every relationship throughout all creation.

Reader 1: On the Third Sunday of Advent, we lit the candle of joy, anticipating the birth of the Child who leads us from the shadows of sorrow into the radiance of rejoicing.

Reader 2: Today, we light the candle of love, as we await the One who is the incarnation of divine love.

People: Through God's love for humankind, God becomes human. Through the Child of Bethlehem, God has loved all of fallen creation, and God has even loved the worst of our enemies as much as ourselves.

Reader 1: The prophet Isaiah affirms that in God's sight, we are precious and treasured and deeply loved (43:4).

Reader 2: Through God's love, the Christ Child overcomes the chasm between God and humanity.

Reader 1: Let us listen to the prophet Isaiah as he also shares the wonder of God's love:

The mountains may depart and the hills be removed,

but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,

Reader 2: *and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,"*

says the LORD, who has compassion on you. (Isaiah 54:10)

People: Recognizing that God's love can revolutionize our lives and initiate a transformation of the world, we now light the candle of love.

Reader 1: May the light of God's love forever shine upon us as we anticipate the birth of the Christ Child. Let us pray: Lord of love, Your grace and goodness exceed the limits of our understanding, and You give us more than we can think to ask.

Reader 2: As we make our journey to the manger, grant that the One who is Love would inspire us to love this world and all people in it as You love us.

People: God of hope, God of peace, God of joy, God of love, into our darkness come. Amen.

***HYMN OF PRAISE**

O Come, All Ye Faithful

#41

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

Sue Smith

Leader: Although the angel announced to the shepherds the good news of great joy, we often fail to embrace the good news of God's salvation. As a result, we not only struggle to find our way, but we also neglect to follow the One who is the Way. So we make our way here to this place of worship where we can be renewed with God's mercy, refreshed with God's grace, and rediscover whom God has created us to be. As God's people, let us now confess our sins to God. Let us pray:

People: **Merciful God of advent expectation, because we do not like to wait, we pray that You would forgive us for our intolerance and indifference. Because we so earnestly desire to hear the anthems of the angels, we do not recognize when we speak the world's language of hurt and anger. As we squint our eyes in searching for the holy family, we do not see the immigrants or other travelers by the side of the road. While many of us are blessed with a cup that overflows, we often ignore the people whose cup is filled with lost dreams. Forgive us, Lord, and redeem us from our sin. Rekindle our sense of wonder, and reshape our priorities, so that in our lives we will reveal the transforming love of the Child born in Bethlehem, for it is in His name that we pray.**

(Silent)

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS (adapted from Titus 2:11-14)

Sue Smith

Leader: The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.

People: **Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, so that He might redeem us from all iniquity.**

Leader: Friends, believe the good news of the gospel:

People: **Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!**

***CANTICLE**

He Came Down

See Insert

PASSING THE PEACE

Sue Smith

Leader: Through the love of our Lord, we anticipate the day when there will be peace on earth and good will among all people. In the spirit of love, let us now greet one another with the peace of Christ.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Word of God

READING FROM THE WORD

Isaiah 63:7-9

***HYMN**

People, Look East

#12

READING FROM THE WORD

Matthew 1:18-25

PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

Broken Ornaments and Ugly Christmas Trees

REFLECTIONS ON THE WORD

(The congregation is invited to offer any thoughts and share any questions concerning today's proclamation.)

***HYMN**

O Little Town of Bethlehem

#44

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

from *The Apostles' Creed*

**I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.**

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Eucharist

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY

Star Light, Star Bright

Combined Worship Teams

***DOXOLOGY**

(tune: Regent Square, *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

**Gratefully in adoration
we praise our dear Savior's birth
whose divine illumination
shines God's love through all the earth.
Here we share our gifts and talents
Worshipping the newborn King.**

-- lyrics by Tom Ulrich

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation to the Table

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise . . .**

Words of Institution and Communion of the People

Prayer after Communion

We have "open" communion, and therefore all who desire a closer relationship with God and want to share in the love of Jesus Christ are invited to participate fully in the sacrament.