

New Covenant Community Church Akron, Ohio First Sunday of Christmas December 29, 2019 10:30 a.m.

The Gathering of God's People

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*CALL TO WORSHIP Nancy Clem

Leader: In the deep shadows of the night, the Light of the World shines forth.

People: Through the pain of birth, hope arrives.

Leader: Out of the tyranny of oppression, a Liberator is born.

People: Amid the poverty of a stable, the Prince of peace comes.

Leader: From our struggle in the wilderness, the Way is revealed to us.

People: In the midst of the world's voices, God's Word has become flesh and lives among us.

*HYMN OF ADORATION

Joy to the World

PH 40

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

Nancy Clem

Leader: Although the Light of life has been born among us,

many of us often close our eyes to the wonders of God's grace.

We choose to live by fear rather than faith,

and we embrace the world's ways rather than God's wisdom.

So, trusting in God's mercy that enables us to begin anew,

let us now make our confession to God,

so that God will remove the dull sheen of what is wrong, and allow the glory of God's light to shine upon us.

Let us pray together:

People: Almighty and gracious God,

even as we celebrate the wonder of Christmas,

we often remain blind to the vision of a renewed world.

We are sinful and foolish creatures who even on our brightest days fail in faith, hope, and love.

Although we are not worthy of Your saving deeds,

we pray that in Your mercy You would forgive us,

so that we may be renewed through the love You have given to us in Jesus Christ, the Holy Child of Bethlehem, in whose name we pray.

(Silent)

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS (adapted from Galatians 4:4)

Nancy Clem

Leader: When the fullness of time had come, God sent the Son, born of a woman, and born under

the law.

People: God sent the Son in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might

receive adoption as God's children.

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 – Cameroon

He came down that we may have love; He came down that we may have love; He came down that we may have love, Hallelujah forevermore.

He came down that we may have peace; He came down that we may have peace; He came down that we may have peace, Hallelujah forevermore.

He came down that we may have joy; He came down that we may have joy; He came down that we may have joy, Hallelujah forevermore.

The Word of God

FIRST READING

To Us a Child is Born

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

- ² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined. . . . ⁶ For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
- authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named
 Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- ⁷ His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. . . .

He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

His Name shall be called

Wonderful Counselor

Mighty God

Everlasting Father

PRINCE OF Peace

SECOND READING

A Promised Ruler from Bethlehem

Micah 5:2-5a

² But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.

⁴ And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; ⁵ and he shall be the one of peace.

AN INTERPRETATIVE WORD

A First Coming

by Madeleine L'Engle

God did not wait till the world was ready, till nations were at peace.

God came when the heavens were unsteady, and prisoners cried out for release.

God did not wait for the perfect time;

God came when the need was deep and great.

God dined with sinners in all their grime, turned water into wine.

God did not wait till hearts were pure.

In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.

To a world like ours, of anguished shame, God came, and God's Light did not go out.

God came to a world which did not mesh, to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.

In the mystery of the Word made flesh, the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane to raise our songs with joyful voice,

for to share our grief, to touch our pain,

God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

CAROL

O Little Town of Bethlehem

PH 44

THIRD READING

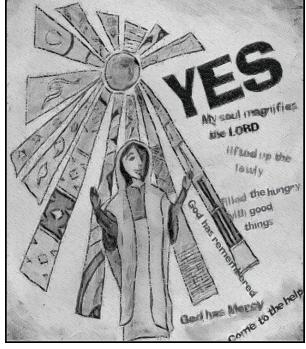
Mary's Song of Praise

Luke 1:39-55

³⁹ In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and evaluimed with a loud ary

the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³ And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴ For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." ⁴⁶ And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

- ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
- ⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.



³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then

- He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
- ⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;
- be has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.
- ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
- ⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

FOURTH READING

The Birth of Jesus

¹ In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.



Luke 2:1-7

AN INTERPRETATIVE WORD

Che Jesus

Anonymous (Cordoba, Argentina, 1970)

They told me that you came back to be born every Christmas.

Man, you're crazy!

... with the stubborn gesture of coming back every Christmas you are trying to tell us something.

That the revolution that all proclaim begins first of all in each heart,

That it doesn't mean only changing structures but changing selfishness for love,

That we have to stop being wolves and return to being brothers and sisters.

That we begin to work seriously for individual conversion and social change that will give to all the possibility of having bread,

education, freedom, and dignity.

That you have a message called the Gospel,

And a Church, and that's us –

A Church that wants to be servant of all,

A Church that knows that because God became human one Christmas there is no other way to love God but to love all people.

If that's the way it is, Jesus, come to my house this Christmas,

Come to my country,

Come to the world of men and women.

And first of all, come to my heart.

CAROL What Child Is This PH 53

FIFTH READING

The Shepherds and the Angels

Luke 2:8-16

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

CAROL

Gentle Mary Laid Her Child

PH 27

John 1:1-14

SIXTH READING The Word Became Flesh

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in

the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

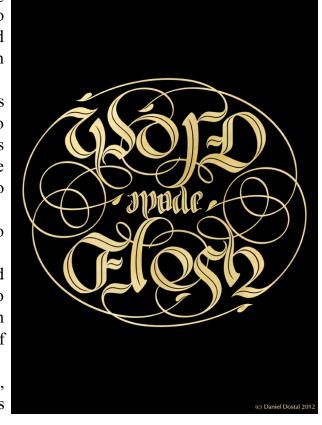
⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did

not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.



AN INTERPRETATIVE WORD Those Who Saw the Star (excerpts)

by Julia Esquivel

The Word, for our sake, became poverty clothed as the poor who live off the refuse heap.

The Word, for our sake, became a sob a thousand times stifled in the immovable mouth of the child who died from hunger.

The Word, for our sake, became danger in the anguish of the mother who worries about her child growing into adulthood.

The Word cut us deeply in that place of shame: the painful reality of the poor.

The Word blew its spirit over the dried bones of the churches, guardians of silence.

The Word awoke us from the lethargy which had robbed us of our hope.

The Word became a path in the jungle, a decision on the farm, love in women, unity among workers, and a Star for those few who can inspire dreams.

The Word became Light,

The Word became History,

The Word became Conflict,

The Word became indomitable Spirit, and sowed its seeds upon the mountain, near the river and in the valley,

and those of good will heard the angels sing.

Tired knees were strengthened, trembling hands were stilled, and the people who wandered in darkness saw the *light* ...

The Word became the seed-of-justice and we conceived peace ...

The Word made *justice* to rain and *peace* came forth from the furrows in the land.

Grace and Truth celebrated together in the laughter of the children rescued by *life*. And the Word shall continue sowing futures in the furrows of Hope.

And we saw its *glory* in the eyes of the poor transformed into real men and women.

And those who saw the Star opened up for us the path we now follow.

CAROL

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

PH 31

The Eucharist

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY

*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
Worshiping the newborn King.

lyrics by Tom Ulrich

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)

Holy One, whose life is the light of all people, in this season of excess for some and great need for others, may the gifts of our hands and our hearts embody Your grace and truth, so that all humanity would experience Your gifts of love and new life, through the Holy Child of Bethlehem, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (*The Lord's Supper will be served by intinction. Please come forward by the center aisle and return to your seat by the outer aisles.*)

Invitation to the Table

Prayer of Thanksgiving

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.

The Sending of God's People

*CLOSING HYMN

Go. Tell It on the Mountain

PH 29

*BENEDICTION

*RESPONSE

Emmanuel

See Screens

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



ANNOUNCEMENTS

If you did not pick up your poinsettias on Christmas Eve, you may get them today.

On December 30, at 1:00 p.m., the Facilities Group will take down the Christmas decorations. You are invited to help (if you desire).

Acme Community Cashback has ended. Please turn in all the receipts that you have collected since August through Dec. 28 within the next week.