**Salem United Church of Christ Moorestown**

**Church Office (610) 759-1652 – www.salemuccbathpa.org**

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**Ministers of the Church – Every Member of Salem UCC**

**Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**December 20, 2020**

**PRELUDE**

**WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH**

 **Reader One:** We live on the brink every day. We stand on the threshold between this world and the next one. We live and move between the ordinary and divine, between the mundane and the mystery. Too often, we forget to look up and see the angels in our living room. We forget that the love we give and live is a sign of eternity, God with us, right now. We forget that company is coming.

 **Reader Two:** Luke tells us that God’s favor came to a girl, an ordinary girl. It might have been you or your daughter; it might have been the girl down the street or your grandchild. But the messenger of God came and greeted her and said, “The Lord is with you.” What a gift and a promise: Emmanuel, God is with us. *(light candle)*

 **Reader One:** We light this candle with love in our hearts for the promise of the nearness of God. Even when we forget to listen, to lean into that presence, God is as close as our own breath, offering love beyond our understanding. In this confused and confusing world, we long for the love of God to enter into our lives. Experiencing that divine love assures us that company is coming.

 **“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” *(4th verse)***

 *O come, Desire of nations, bind all people in one heart and mind; bid envy strife and quarrels cease, fill the whole world with heaven’s peace. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel.*

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: Welcome this day to worship.

**All: The light of this season has beckoned us forward.**

One: Come and rejoice, for God’s light is coming to us.

**All: Praise be to God who pours light into our lives.**

One: Open your hearts and spirits and receive the blessings of God.

**All: May we always be ready to respond in joyful ways to God’s love.**

**OPENING PRAYER**

**All: In the rush of preparation for holiday celebration, we come to this place to be fed by God. We need the peace, hope, love and joy that this season represents. We need to listen again with wonder at the magnificent words of Mary as she proclaims her faithful participation in God’s most miraculous gift. Open our hearts this day, Lord, to receive the words and the blessings, to be fed and then to be those who will share with others as you have shared with us. In Jesus’ Name, we pray. Amen.**

 **HYMN #191** *“It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” (verses 1 and 3)*

 *It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold; “Peace on the earth, good will to men from heaven's all-gracious King”: the world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.*

 *For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old, when with the ever-circling years, shall come the time foretold, when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling, and the whole world give back the song which now the angels sing.*

**GOSPEL LESSON** Luke 1:26-38

**SPECIAL MUSIC** *“Mary Did You Know”* by Morgan Taylor

**A TIME OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE**

**All: Almighty God, we know that the things you have done for us are great.   We know the greatness of your strength, and we know the unexpectedness of your mercy.  So why do we try to make your coming into the world cute, cozy, and soft, like a fuzzy blanket on a cold night? Forgive us, O Lord, for the ways we reduce your glory into something easy.  Prepare us, O Lord, to stop what we are doing, to look, and to listen; to let our jaws drop and let chills run up our spines; to stare wide-eyed in wonder and awe at the glory of the Lord dwelling among us. Hear now our silent confession.**

*(silence is kept)*

One: The truth of Advent is this: God is coming to us! We are not alone.
 In Christ, we are accepted. We are set free of the past. We are given to the future.

**All: Thanks be to God. Amen.**

**PASSING OF THE PEACE!**

Leader: Peace be with you.

**People: And also with you!**

Leader: Share the peace of Christ with one another using the comments on the Facebook

 page.

**CHILDREN’S MESSAGE**

**TODAY’S MESSAGE** A Scripture Drama*“Speechless in Jerusalem*”

 *(M&M and the Rolling Stone and other Scripture-Dramas – Penny L Lowes)*

 Performed by Morgan Taylor and Vicki Troxell

**HYMN #194** *“Born in the Night, Mary’s Child” (all verses)*

 *Born in the night, Mary's Child, a long way from your home; coming in need, Mary's Child, born in a borrowed room.*

 *Clear shining light, Mary's Child,your face lights up our way; Light of the world, Mary's Child, dawn on our darkened day.*

 *Truth of our life, Mary's Child, you tell us God is good; yes, it is true, Mary's Child,
shown on your cross of wood.*

 *Hope of the world, Mary's Child, you're coming soon to reign; King of the earth, Mary's Child, walk in our streets again.*

**OFFERING** *(for those worshipping virtually)–*I invite you at this time to consider ways to express your thankfulness for all that God provides by giving of your time and talents in new ways in this time. I also ask you to consider how you will offer your tithes and offerings to support the ministry of our church at this time as well – some options are: on-line giving available through our website or your smartphone, mail check in weekly or set aside your offering each week and mail it in monthly. Thank you.

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION.**

One: Creator God, we bring our gifts and ourselves, our treasure and our heart. Bless us, in all that we offer, that our offerings might be used in your call to us: to be stewards but not owners of that which have been given, to be places in which you abide but not where you are constrained. Bless us, that in our giving, we might open ourselves to your call to seek justice and mercy for all that you have created, for all that you love. Amen.

**JOYS AND CONCERNS**

**PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD’S PRAYER** (debts and debtors)

**HYMN #208** *“Oh, How Joyfully” (all verses)*

 *1 Oh, how joyfully, oh, how hopefully, waits the world on Christmas Eve!
Love comes healing, God revealing. Friends, be joyful and believe!*

 *2 Oh, how joyfully, oh, how peacefully, sleeps the world on Christmas Night!
Sins are covered, grace discovered. In our darkness shines the light!*

 *3 Oh, how joyfully, oh, how thankfully, wakes the world on Christmas Morn!
God has spoken, death is broken. Alleluia! Christ is born!*

**BENEDICTION**

 Be people of love.
 Let love live in your heart. Share the love of Christ with all you meet.
 Share love by loving those you see regularly.

 Share love by loving those you do not know.

 In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share love.
 As you go out into the wonder of God’s creations, share hope, peace, joy and love with

 those you meet. Amen.

**THREE FOLD AMEN**

**POSTLUDE**

*\* Portions of this worship service were adapted from “ebpctn.org”, “reworship”, “ministry matters”, “liturgylink”, “seasons of the spirit”*

**ACOLYTE: Jada Kunkel.**

**PRESENTED TO THE GLORY OF GOD: The FLOWERS in honor of Brady’s birthday on the 19th by the Bernstein Family. The MEMORIAL CANDLE is burning in memory of Loved Ones of Linda Washburn and Wayne Bartholomew.**

**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE: Our Christmas Eve Service will be virtual only. You will find this service on Facebook or our website anytime you wish on Christmas Eve. We hope you will enjoy this service with your family. HAVE A SAFE, HEALTHY AND MERRY CHRISTMAS.**

**COVID CHRISTMAS CAROLING.** Join us this afternoon at 2 PM (weather permitting) for an outdoor time of fellowship, storytelling, singing Christmas carols and decorating the Christmas tree in the courtyard with bird friendly ornaments. Please make or purchase a bird friendly ornament and bring it with you to decorate the tree. We will gather outside in the front of the red sanctuary doors and in the courtyard. Social distancing and masks covering your mouth and nose will be required. Hope you can join us for this “in person” gathering. Remember to dress for the weather. The gathering will last approximately ½ hour. If standing for ½ hour is difficult for you, please bring your own chair.

**2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES:** If you won’t be at the Covid Christmas Caroling to pick up your 2021 offering envelopes, please call the church office to schedule a time to pick them up. 610-759-1652.

**We are looking for people who would like to help with recording the service or virtual worship. Please speak to Ed Taylor or Vicki Troxell, if you are interested.**

**SEARCHING FOR A TREASURER:** We are still looking for someone to be treasurer of Salem. Please speak to Vicki or any Consistory member, if you are interested in the position or if you have questions about the position.

**THE ALTAR GUILD HAS THE YELLOW GARBAGE BAGS TO SELL, THE COST IS $10,00/ROLL.** If you are interested, please speak to Donna Schlegel or call the church office at 610-759-1652.