3rd Sunday in Advent: Joy



10 A. M. Worship for Sunday, December 17, 2023

First Memorial Presbyterian Church of Dover, New Jersey

***Gathering and Focusing during Prelude:*** **- Rachel Persenaire**

***Thank you for choosing to worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with us today!***

***\*We invite you to stand if you are able for those portions of the liturgy marked with an asterisk.***

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***Sung Approach to Worshiping Our God:*** **- Rachel Persenaire**

All:*VERSE 2:* ***Watchman, tell us of the night,***

***Higher yet that star ascends.***

***Traveler, blessedness and light,***

***Peace and truth its course portends.***

***Watchman, will its beams alone***

***Gild the spot that gave them birth?***

***Traveler, ages are its own;***

***See, it bursts o‘er all the earth.***

- Words by John Bowring, 1825. Now in the public domain.,

***Opening Words:* - Rachel Persenaire**

Rachel: The Promised One of God brings good news to the oppressed

and binds up the brokenhearted. **(**Isaiah 61:1)

All: ***We are witnesses to the light of Christ!* (**John 1:7)

Rachel: The Promised One of God proclaims liberty to captives

and release to prisoners**. (**Isaiah 61:1)

All: ***We are witnesses to the light of Christ!* (**John 1:7)

Rachel: The Promised One of God comforts all who mourn

and gives a mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.**(**Isaiah 61:2 & 3)

All: ***Rejoicing always, praying without ceasing,***

***holding fast to what is good,***

***we are witnesses to the light of Christ!*** (1 Thess. 5:16-17, 21)

- The Opening Words (above) are as found on page 11. of Feasting on the Word, Worship Companion

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**Third Sunday LIGHT OF GRACE Advent Wreath Candle Lighting:**

Leader 1: Today we light the third of our Advent candles, the candle of JOY.

(LIGHT the PINK candle.)

Leader 2: When Mary, the mother of our Lord, visited her kinswoman Elizabeth,

Elizabeth’s unborn son, John, leaped for joy at the sound of Mary’s

greeting.

Elizabeth was filled with joy,

knowing that the promised Messiah would soon be born.

We, too, rejoice as we prepare to celebrate our Savior’s birth

All: ***We will rejoice in the Lord, now and forever!***

Leader 3: The prophet Isaiah foretold a highway, the Way of Holiness,

a place where the redeemed would walk.

Following that holy Way,

the redeemed would live in the presence of God

and know everlasting joy.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

All: ***We will rejoice in the Lord, now and forever!***

***Choral Anthem:*** “Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah” – Wayne L. Wold

***Call to Confession:***

Alan**:** In the midst of our joy,

we are called to repent and acknowledge our need for a Savior.

Let us confess our sins to God, and ask his forgiveness.

Let us pray as with one voice…

***Corporate Prayer of Confession:***

All: ***Almighty God, while we rejoice in the birth of our Savior,***

***we do not always find joy in following him.***

***We seek to satisfy ourselves with earthly joy,***

***joy that does not last.***

***We turn away from the guidance of your Word***

***and follow our own selfish desires.***

***We do not walk in love as Jesus walked***

***and instead put our needs ahead of the needs of others.***

***Have mercy on us and forgive our sins for Jesus’ sake.***

***Lead us to find joy in following Jesus our Lord.***

***Amen…***

*(We pause here for a few moments of silent, personal confession…)*

***Assurance of Pardon:***

Alan: God sent his son, the Price of Peace, to be our savior.

Jesus shed his precious, innocent blood,

suffering the penalty of death that we deserved for our sins.

I announce to you that your sins ARE forgiven

in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

All: ***Jesus, Prince of Peace,***

***rule in our hearts with the peace that you alone can bring.***

- The Lighting of the Advent Wreath, Call to Confession, Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon (above) are as found on page

57 of THE LIGHT OF GRACE by Creative Communications for the Parish, a division of Bayard, Inc. Written by Carol Geisler.

***\*Hymn of Praise No. 2:*** – Charles Wesley, 1744

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

***\*A Historic Confession of Faith:***

All: ***I BELIEVE IN GOD, the Father almighty,***

***creator of heaven and earth.***

***I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, God’s only Son, our Lord,***

***who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,***

***suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died,***

***and was buried; he descended to the dead.***

***On the third day he rose again;***

***He ascended into heaven,***

***he is seated at the right hand of the Father,***

***and he will come to judge the living and the dead.***

***I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, the holy catholic Church,***

***The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,***

***The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.***

- THE APOSTLES’ CREED (Ecumenical Translation)

***\*Celebrating the Peace Jesus Came to Bring:***

**- Rev. Alan R. Schaefer**

Alan: “The days are surely coming” says the Lord,

“when I will fulfill my promise:

I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David;

and he shall execute justice and righteousness.

All: ***He shall bring peace to our hearts,***

***that we may hope for his peace in the world.***

Alan: The peace of Christ be with you all!

All: ***And also with you!***

Alan: Without moving from where you now stand,

please take the next few moments to share a warm greeting

and a sincere sign of God’s peace with those around you.

***Children’s Message:*** **- Megan Quinones**

***Sung Prayer for Illumination:***   - Clara H. Scott, 1895

“Open My Eyes That I May See”

1. ***Open my eyes, that I may see***

***Glimpses of truth Thou hast for me.***

***Place in my hands the wonderful key***

***That shall unclasp and set me free.***

Refrain: ***Silently now, I wait for Thee, Ready my God,***

***Thy will to see. Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!***

1. ***Open my ears, that I may hear Voices of truth Thou sendest clear;***

***And while the wave notes fall on my ear, Everything false will disappear.***

Refrain: ***Silently now, I wait for Thee, Ready my God,***

***Thy will to see. Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine!***

1. ***Open my mouth, and let me bear Gladly the warm truth everywhere;***

***Open my heart and let me prepare Love with Thy children thus to share.***

Refrain: ***Silently now, I wait for Thee, Ready my God,***

***Thy will to see. Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine!***

- Words & Music by Clara H. Scott, 1895—Now in the public domain**. Hymn No 324 in THE PRESBYTERIAN HYMNAL**

***Scripture Lesson:* - Megan Quinones**

***The Gospel According to John***

***chapter 1: verses 1 thru 4, 9 thru 13***

**Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church… -** Revelation 2:7

In the beginning the Word was already there. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were made through him. Nothing that has been made was made without him. Life was in him, and that life was the light for all the people.

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. The Word was in the world that was made through him. But the world did not recognize him. He came to what was his own. But his own people did not accept him. Some people did accept him. They believed in his name. He gave them the right to become children of God. To be a child of God has nothing to do with human parents. Children of God are not born because of human choice or because a husband wants them to be born. They are born because of what God does.

New International Reader’s Version Kid’s Study Bible

Megan:**This is the Word of the Lord…**

All: ***Thanks be to God!***

***CHRISTMAS PAGEANT***

***Introduction:* - Megan Quinones**

***Part 1: Mary & Joseph “O Little Town of Bethlehem”***

***O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!***

***Above thy deep and dreamless sleep The silent stars go by;***

***Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting Light:***

***The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight.***

***For Christ is born of Mary, And gathered all above,***

***While mortals sleep, the angels keep Their watch of wondering love.***

***O morning stars, together Proclaim the holy birth!***

***And praises sing to God the King, And peace to men on earth.***

***Part 2: The Animals “Away in a Manger”***

***Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,***

***The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.***

***The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,***

***The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.***

***The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,***

***The little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.***

***I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,***

***And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.***

***Part 3: Angels: “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”***

***Hark, the herald angels sing,***

***“Glory to the newborn King.***

***Peace on earth and mercy mild,***

***God and sinners reconciled.”***

***Joyful all ye nations rise,***

***Join the triumph of the skies,***

***With the’ angelic host proclaim,***

***“Christ is born in Bethlehem.”***

***Hark, the herald angels sing,***

***“Glory to the newborn King!”***

***Hail, the heav’n-born Prince of Peace,***

***Hail the Son of Righteousness!***

***Light and life to all He brings,***

***Ris’n with healing in His wings.***

***Mild He lays His glory by,***

***Born that man no more may die,***

***Born to raise the sons of earth,***

***Born to give us second birth.***

***Hark, the herald angels sing,***

***“Glory to the newborn King!”***

***Part 4: Shepherd “Go Tell It on the Mountain”***

*CHORUS:* ***Go tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere;***

***Go tell it on the mountain That Jesus Christ is born!***

***While shepherds kept their watching O’er silent flocks by night,***

***Behold through-out the heavens There shone a holy light.*** *(chorus)*

***The shepherds feared and trembled When lo! Above the earth***

***Rang out the angel chorus That hailed our Savior’s birth.*** *(chorus)*

***Part 5: Wise Persons and Star: “We Three Kings”***

***We three kings of orient are Bearing gifts we traverse afar***

***Field and fountain Moor and mountain Following yonder star***

***O star of wonder, star of night Star with royal beauty bright***

***Westward leading, still proceeding Guide us to thy perfect light***

***Part 6: Conclusion: “We Wish You a Merry Christmas”***

***We wish you a Merry Christmas We wish you a merry Christmas***

***We wish you a Merry Christmas and a happy new year***

***Good tidings we bring to you and your kin***

***We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year***

***Call for the Offering and Prayer of Dedication:***

Alan:We are grateful to have you with us as we worship together

on this Third Sunday in Advent;

and we hope you will be stewardship partners with us

in our ministry here and around the world

as you have been partners with us in our worship,

whether here, in our sanctuary,

or somewhere safe or convenient to you on your computer.

If you worshiped with us on your computer, and are able

and willing, please consider mailing an offering to our church

office this week @ 51 West Blackwell Street, Dover NJ 07801.

*Invitation to the offering:*

At this time of year,

the abundance of some and the needs of so many

stand in marked contrast.

As we (make our offerings this week),

may Christ’s heart rejoice and the needs of others be tended.

Let us pray together…

All: **Gracious God, teach us to give thanks in all circumstances,**

**for you are always with us.**

**Thank you for the privilege of sharing what we have with others,**

**of giving ourselves away in love,**

**and of receiving the gifts that others share with us.**

**With our whole being, spirit and soul and body, we rejoice in you.**

**Through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.***

- The Invitation to the Offering & Prayer of Dedication (as above) are as found on page 14

of Feasting On the Word, Liturgies for Year B, vol.1.

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***Offertory:*** Instrumental **- Rachel Persenaire**

***Joys and Concerns:***

***Prayers of and for the People and Lord’s Prayer:***

Alan**:**

… which we gladly follow with Jesus’ prayer when he taught us to pray…- Written by Alan R. Schaefer

All: ***Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name…***

***\*Hymn of Parting No. 30:*** – Geoffrey Ainger, 1964

“Born in the Night, Mary’s Child”

***\*Charge and Benediction:***

Alan:**(**I charge you to…) …Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.

Witness to the light of Christ so that all might believe through him.

Let us all be found ready and expectant when that time comes.

(Now,) May the God of hope

fill you with all joy and peace in believing,

so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Amen?

All: ***Amen.***

- The Benediction (above) is as found on page 60 of The Light of Grace.

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***Postlude:* - Rachel Persenaire**

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Unless otherwise noted, most of the bulletin / liturgy is written by the Pastor, the Rev. Mr. Alan R. Schaefer, H. R.



**OUR NEXT CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION**

**IS *CHRISTMAS* EVE, DECEMBER 24th AT 6:00 p. m.**

**OUR NEXT LORD’S DAY CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION WILL BE ON JANUARY 7, 2023.**

**FIRST MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND CONGREGATION**

**51 West Blackwell Street, Dover, NJ 07801**

**A member congregation of Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey,**

**The Synod of the Northeast, and**

**The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.**

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**THANK YOU TO EVERYONE** who has filled a shoe box, paid to ship a shoe box, or prayed for the recipients of our shoe boxes. These boxes will truly have an impact on many children’s lives and bring the love of God to many parts of the world.

**DID YOU KNOW**: Since the first year of this ministry, 209 million children have received a box in 170 countries and territories. Since 2009 35.4 million children have engaged in the discipleship program that is offered after they received their box and 17.4 million children have made the decision to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior,

***AGAIN, NEXT MONTH,***

***We will repeat taking a sojourn to the Chapel for our worship services from January 14th until March 17th (weather permitting) to save approximately $1,000 a year on natural gas costs to heat the Sanctuary.***

***For those who regularly use “the lift” to gain access to our Sanctuary, please park and plan your entry to the building and the use of the stair lift in the East Tower entrance. Thank you!***