4th Sunday in Advent: Love



10 A. M. Worship for Sunday, December 24, 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 3:* ***Watchman, tell us of the night,***

***For the morning seems to dawn.***

***Traveler, darkness takes its flight,***

***Doubt and terror are withdrawn.***

***Watchman, let your wanderings cease;***

***Hasten to your quiet home.***

***Traveler, lo, the Prince of Peace,***

***Lo, the Son of God is come!***

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

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

Rachel: (Mary said,) My soul magnifies the Lord.

My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. **(**Luke 1:46b)

For the Mighty One has done great things,

And holy is God’s name. **(**Luke 1:49)

All: ***(This morning we stand on the threshold***

***of the greatest thing he has ever done,***

***as we await the night in breathless anticipation.)***

- The Opening Words (above) are as found on page 16 of Feasting on the Word, Worship Companion

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

Leader 1: **Today we light the fourth of our Advent candles, the candle of LOVE.**

**(LIGHT the LAST PURPLE CANDLE.)**

Leader 1: **God had promised**

**that his steadfast love would not depart from his people.**

**He would remember his covenant promise.**

**Now the time had come for his promise to be fulfilled.**

All: ***For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son!***

Leader 2: **In his grace, God chose Mary, a virgin in Nazareth of Galilee,**

**to be the mother of our Lord.**

**The virgin-born son would be the Son of God.**

**He was to be named Jesus, which means “God saves.”**

All: ***For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son!***

Leader 3: **The apostle John wrote,**

**“In this the love of God was made manifest among us,**

**that God sent his only Son into the world,**

**so that we might live through him.”** (1 John4:9)

All: ***For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,***

***that whoever believes in him should not perish***

***but have eternal life!”*** (John3:16)

- The Liturgy of the Advent Wreath as found on page 16 of THE LIGHT OF GRACE

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

***Call to Confession:***

Alan**:** Let us confess our sins to God,

asking him to remember his covenant love

and thus to forgive us for Jesus’ sake.

Let us pray as with one voice…

***Corporate Prayer of Confession:***

All: ***Almighty God, your steadfast love endures forever.***

***Our love so often fails.***

***We do not always trust you as we should.***

***We know that you love us,***

***but we do not always love others as we should.***

***We do not walk in love as Jesus our Savior did.***

***We follow our own selfish desires***

***instead of looking to the needs of others.***

***Have mercy on us, and forgive our sins…***

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

***Assurance of Pardon:***

Alan: God remembered his covenant promise and in his steadfast love

He sent his Son to be our Savior.

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: ***Almighty God, your steadfast love will not depart from us!***

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

84 & 85 of THE LIGHT OF GRACE by Creative Communications for the Parish, a division of Bayard, Inc. Written by Carol Geisler.

***\*Hymn of Praise No. 16:*** – Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924)

“The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came”

***\*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 Luke***

***chapter 1: verses 46 thru 55***

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

46 And Mary said,

47 “My soul magnifies the Lord,

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.

51 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;

53 he 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.”

- THE NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION (of the Bible-a translation)

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

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

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

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

on this Fourth 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:*

Joining Mary’s joyful song,

our souls proclaim the greatness of the Lord,

and our spirits rejoice in God our Savior.

With humble and grateful hearts, let us bring our offerings to God.

Let us pray together…

All: **Holy God, your love is magnified in the gift of your Son,**

**whom you so freely share with us.**

**Bless these gifts that we offer to lift up the lowly**

**and fill the hungry in your coming reign of justice and peace;**

**in Christ’s name.**

***Amen.***

- The Invitation to the Offering & Prayer of Dedication (as above) are as found on page 18

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**:** …

- Written by Alan R. Schaefer

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

***\*Hymn of Parting No. 27:*** – Joseph Simpson Cook, 1919

“Gentle Mary Laid Her Child”

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

Alan:Jesus was born in us once, probably early in our lives.

Let us remember his birth in every aspect of the music, rituals

and traditions of his holy season so that our faith and example

can inspire others to the glory of God.

When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son,

born of woman, born under the law,

to redeem those who were under the law,

so that we might receive adoption as sons and daughters.

Amen?

All: ***Amen.***

- The Benediction (above) is as found on page 97 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, 2024.**

**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 terrirtories. 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!***