

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BAYFIELD

2023 12 24

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on this holy Christmas eve. We are delighted you are here to worship! If you are visiting, as a new or recurring visitor, please share your information in the guest book at the entrance to the sanctuary.

**Announcements**

**Hymn O Come , All Ye Faithful ( v 1, 3) #159**

**Call to Worship 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent Love [Insert]**

**Hymn Away in a Manger #149**

**Lighting the Christ Candle [Insert]**

**Hymn Hark! The Herald Angels Sing #139**

**Prayer of Adoration and Confession [responsive]**

God of mystery and mercy, you stir in our hearts and bring us joy. You stir in our minds and bring us wisdom. You stir in the world and bring hope for the future. You came into this world as a vulnerable infant to connect with your people. So we come to adore you with the angels; to bow with the shepherds; to kneel in wonder with the magi; to ponder your mystery with Joseph; to love and cherish you with Mary. We come with humble hearts full of joy.

**God of grace and truth, in Christ you offer us the gift of yourself, but we are attracted to presents under the tree. You came to us in flesh and blood, but we fail to see you in the humans right beside us. You shine in the world, but we dwell on the darkness in the daily news. Forgive us. Renew our hope and our trust in you as you reach out to us. Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon and Sharing the Peace**

Walk in the assurance of God's grace and forgiveness as people of light and forgive one another. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

**Special Music Mary Had a Baby**

**Linda Street**

African-American Spiritual Arranged by Joan Frey Boytim

**To Hear The Word Of God**

**Prayer For Illumination and Scripture** Your Word, O God, comes to us in the translation of ancient scripture. Send your Holy Spirit to open our minds with

understanding and our hearts with wisdom in the name of Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

My message this evening leads into the scripture readings. The Christmas story begins in darkness. There was the darkness of oppression. The people of Israel were a conquered people. They were a beaten and a defeated people. There was the darkness of persecution. On that first Christmas, the mood was one of despair and resignation.

The world continues to struggle in the midst of darkness. There are wars and rumors of wars, hunger and unemployment, racism, loneliness, and a persistent sense of emptiness. The poet Robert Frost wrote: "I have been acquainted with the night. I have walked in the rain and out of the rain. I have been acquainted with the night."

In some way, darkness has touched the life of each person here tonight. Scripture affirms that the darkness is real and it is present. And, scripture affirms the presence of light. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "people who walk in darkness have seen a great light." The gospel of John, "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it."

The gospels, the good news of Christ, tells of the light that appeared in the midst of a deep darkness ... We gather to remember and to celebrate that this light did not simply flicker, it became an eternal flame.

### **Scripture**

Gospel Luke 1:26-56 [B#56 /W#58 ]

**Hymn** O Little Town of Bethlehem **#165**

Gospel Luke 2:8-20 [B#58 /W#59 ]

**Special Music** O Holy Night Linda Street

Gospel John 1:1-14 [B#91 /W#94 ]

May God bless our understanding of this, God's holy word. **The word of the Lord.**

### **Prayers of the People with the Lord's prayer**

Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, we praise you with heart and mind, body and soul. You brought order out of chaos, formed us in your image, and set us in the world to love and serve you, to live in peace with one another and all that you have made.

When we turn from you, you do not turn from us. When we become captive to the ways of the world, you hear our cries and lead us to freedom. You send prophets who speak of your excellent ways.

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Holy and Merciful God, maker of all; blessed are you for all the wonders of creation. All your works, from the heights of the heavens to the depths of the sea, echo the music of your praise. You gave us breath and speech, melody and harmony, to join with all living things to sing your praise. God of hope and healing, we come to you with love and concern for the world.

In joy, we praise you for the birth of Christ, your word and love made flesh. And in hope, we wait for a day when the whole world will experience the peace, truth, justice, healing and reconciliation of your reign, to which Christ's birth points, and he grew to preach.

On that first Christmas, in Christ you put on frail flesh, were born and lived life always on the move in a dangerous world. Like so many children, in Christ you fled terror and had to find refuge, sometimes in foreign lands.

In this time of quiet and contemplation we remember:

people and families living close to the edge of survival, worrying about where their next meal will come from, or where they will find shelter...

those who will spend Christmas alone, in hospital, or weighed down by grief...

those who work tonight and tomorrow today while we celebrate or relax...

those who have lost their sense of joy and wonder and turned to cynicism or despair...

those who face the year ahead with fear and anxiety ...

those who celebrate the birth of a new life, a new love, or a new way of being...

those whom we have loved and who loved us, who now dwell in the eternal joy of your presence...

Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our voices. Hear our prayers. Loving God, by your Spirit, surround us with strength and love. God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with challenges: Jim T; Judith & Gerry; Rob, Valerie, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey & Grace; Lori and family; and, Don, Phyllis, and Shawn.

You have called us to be children of your new order. We pray for the courage and grace to open our eyes and respond to the calls for justice and peace. Reform our hearts and shape our actions to follow in the ways of Christ as we continue his ministry in your world.

Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth, peace.

In deep gratitude for all the gifts of this life, we gather our voices in the prayer that the child of Bethlehem taught us ... Our Father who art in heaven, hallow'ed be thy name. Thy

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Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

**Lighting of Candles** The sanctuary lights are turned off as the candles are lit for the Passing of the Light, the hymn Silent Night, and the benediction. To light your candle, tilt the unlit candle to share the flame. Do not tilt the lit candle!

Just before the lights are turned off... open your hymn books to #154 Silent night. As you open your hymn books and hold your candle, I draw your attention to the light cast by the candles around the sanctuary. In a moment you will close your eyes and when you open them notice the light cast by the candles.

**Hymn                      Silent night                      #154**

**Commissioning and Benediction**

May the love of Jesus the Christ embrace you

May the joy of Christ fill your heart.

May the peace of Christ give you rest

And may the hope of Jesus the Christ guide you into the year ahead. Amen.

**Postlude                      Joy to the world                      #153**