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THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 19, 2021
 at 10:30am

Welcome to CAPC Oakland!

We are a reformed, multicultural, politically purple, community of followers of Jesus. Together we seek to vigorously live our faith in our words, actions, and relationships in the East Bay.

In this time of disruption and new normal we gather hybrid-ly (both in person and via Zoom).
This is our new normal.

It's something that we'll get better at each time we gather, allowing us to gather together and be consistent with our values and commitments. We ask that you wear a mask during worship as some of our community (our children in particular) are not yet vaccinated.

CHILDREN

We've reconfigured out how to do our Godly Play program for children via Zoom. We meet 9:30-10am on Sundays via Zoom. Info in the announcements on the back.

POST-SERVICE GARDEN PARTY

We are serving a light snack and coffee after worship in the garden throughout the summer. You can enjoy that mask-free. We ask you to not touch any of the food or drink, instead let us serve you.

PRAYER CARDS

To operationalize participation in our Prayers of the People we invite you to fill out a prayer card and share it with the liturgist or to share you requests in the chat on ZOOM labeling it with 'prayer.'

CCL #1137062.

GATHERING AROUND GOD'S WORD BOTH IN PERSON & VIA ZOOM

PRELUDE "The Snow Lay On The Ground"

GATHERING SONG "The Lowly Will Be Lifted Up"

CALL TO WORSHIP

SONG OF PRAISE "Light One Candle To Watch For Messiah"

HEARING GOD'S WORD

LISTENING TO SCRIPTURE Luke 1:39-55

PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD "The Visible Hand of God" - Monte McClain
 DIALOGUE SERMON - Louise Waters & Gary Yee

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

SONG OF RESPONSE "No Wind At The Window"

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER - Myrna Shadley
 WE USE A CALL AND RESPONSE LITURGICALLY PRAYED AT THE CONCLUSION OF SHARING A PRAYER.

Leader: God, in your mercy.
People: Hear our prayer.

COLLECTION OF OUR OFFERINGS AND GIFTS
 "When Out Of Poverty Is Born"

THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

SENDING SONG "People Look East"

SENDING CALL AND RESPONSE

Leader: God is good! Leader: And all the time!
People: All the time! People: God is good!

EXHORTATION & BENEDICTION

PASSING THE PEACE OF GOD "La paz de Christo" (Spanish)

In the season of a pandemic new normal, you're invited to pass the peace of God however and to whoever you can this day as we live our lives of disciples of Jesus sheltering-in-place, as a living sign of the Dominion of God at work moving us toward the healing transformation of the world.

POSTLUDE "In Bethlehem A Newborn Boy"

Reflections on Today's Readings Luke 1:39-55

The Gospel of Luke is one of the four Biblical tellings of the life, teaching and mission of Jesus of Nazareth. Luke writes with a mastery of Greek that other writers don't share, indicating that he was highly educated and spoke Greek well. He takes pains to explain what Jewish traditions and cultural pieces mean to non-Jewish readers (called Gentiles or "Greeks" in Bible-talk).

We've already encountered the two women at the center of today's reading in the larger story of the birth of Jesus, as told by Luke. Elizabeth is Mary's aunt. She's married to the priest Zechariah who had an encounter with God in the Temple. (Luke 1:5-25) God gives him a vision specifically that he and Elizabeth their old infertile post-menopausal age, would finally have a child. He disbelieves and doubts God. And so he's silenced - rendered mute when he should have simply listened rather than insisting on talking. Elizabeth is traumatized. In their society fertility was idolized as crucial for women and used as a cultural measure of their individual worth. Married to an important man (a priest), yet childless and old, she would have been invisible and silent in society. It's striking that we encounter her, here in today's reading it's her speaking with a loud voice. That which was invisible and silent is seen and heard front and center.

Mary's song of gratitude and faith echoes one of another woman in the Hebrew Scriptures who prayed for God's help in her infertility. Hannah becomes the mother of the great priest Samuel: a story told in 1 Samuel 1 and 2. Her prayer of gratitude to God when she finally becomes pregnant after years of shame is strikingly similar to the song sung by Mary in today's reading. Compare in particular Luke 1:50-53 and 1 Samuel 2:4-8. Hannah was invisible to everyone except her husband because of her barrenness. Most likely she was traumatized by the view by others of her as broken, incomplete, less than whole because of her infertility. She too, although societally invisible, makes God's movement in the world visible. Her story seems to be on the mind of Mary as she prayerfully sings to God.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in the text?
- Today's scripture points to the consistently mysterious way in which God acts in the world differently than we would. Those that are invisible, often not noticed, and speakers for God - whereas the usual leaders, the ones we assume to "know things" Zechariah are unable to understand what God is up to. Where else in scripture do you encounter stories in which God's invisible hand in the world is made visible in ways that challenge and reverse our expectations?
- You might call this the first Christmas song. What does Mary sing of in her confession of faith? How does it speak to you?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you - or to us, as a church - to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

December Birthdays

14 Fredora Darmstadt 15 Janet Majors
31 Gianelle Beatty 2011

Weekly Calendar

Today we're celebrating Christmas with our annual Holiday Sweater wearing and Christmas Cooking Eating program today in and after worship. Thank you to all our bakers!

Deacons Meeting - today after cookies & worship

Letters of Love send a greeting card to someone who could use a good word or to one of our governmental representatives (back wall). Grab a Christmas Card to send to Ross Laverty - this morning in the entryway!

Winter Solstice Labyrinth Walk - Tuesday, December 21st at sunset in the garden. *This is the longest night of the year, when the light begins to grow again in terms of daylight. This astronomical fact is why we celebrate Christmas in December.*

Christmas Eve Candlelight Hybrid Service - December 24th at 7pm in person & on zoom.

Blessing Bag Distribution - Friday, December 24th 4-5 pm. We're distributing new underclothes and toiletries to our unhoused neighbors. If you'd like to help check in with Linda Davis and/or Sharon Nelson.

Friday Night Meal - Friday, December 24th 5:30-6:30pm. This next Friday we have a small group helping us to prepare a simple-to-serve and clean-up meal as Friday is Christmas Eve. We're serving the meal slightly earlier from 5:30-6:30pm. Sign up online w/ the QR Code to help with set-up and serving, and clean-up.

Godly Play for Children Sundays 9:30-10am on Zoom

Thank you to Today's Worship Leadership:
Coffee Hour: The Women's Prayer Group
Godly Play: David Kittams
Music: Pete Feltman, Dave Eagle, Ben Kramarz, Gabe Szilardi-Tierney, Roger Kim
Prayer Liturgist: Myrna Shadley
Preaching: Monte McClain
Video Tech: Albert Hussian, Dann Wilkens

LYRICS & RESPONSES FOR TODAY'S CELEBRATION

We seek to use gender inclusive language, as we affirm that God is neither male or nor female – but wholly and holy other. In doing so, we seek to empower each person to participate fully in worship, able to identify with the lyrics of songs and the words of our communal prayers.

“The Lowly Will Be Lifted Up”

New word to “Our God, Our Help in Ages Past”

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette | Glory to God #106

The lowly will be lifted up,
the humble will arise,
And hungry homes will overflow
with all that God supplies.

O God, we sing of blessedness
as we await Christ's birth;
May we who know abundant love
reach out to love your earth.

As Mary sang her thanks and praise,
we sing of living Bread.
May we reach out to share Christ's life
till all the world is fed.

It's living Bread we gladly share,
and bread for bodies, too.
Remind us, when we feed the poor,
we're giving food to you.

God, you uphold the cause
of those who hunger, long-oppressed.
May we your church seek justice here,
and share your blessedness.

In many ways, you bless your world
with good and wondrous things;
And so with Mary, we proclaim,
"With joy my spirit sings."

Call to Worship & Advent Wreath Litany

*Adapted from a prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed |
A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.*

One: We are seeking—
deeper faith,
**ALL: a place to belong,
the feeling that God is here in this room.**

One: We are seeking—
joy that overflows,
**ALL: the movement of the Spirit,
a hand to hold, when alone in the dark.**

One: We are seeking—
ALL: the freedom to be,

One: the courage to love,
**ALL: the conviction to act
in the face of injustice.**

One: We are seeking, but here in this space,
ALL: We are found.

One: Take a deep breath.
This is your sanctuary.
ALL: God is here. We are found.

One: Today we light the candle of love
to remind us of God's love:
ALL: God's love is like an open door.

One: God's love is the streetlight
that guides us home.
ALL: God's love is a warm bed to fall into.

One: God's love is a table with room for you.
ALL: God's love is a crackling fireplace.

One: God's love is the sun that streams
through the windows.
**ALL: God's love is the roof over our heads
and the floor beneath our feet.**

One: God's love is a home for you and me,
for neighbors and strangers,
for family and friends,
for enemies and partners.
ALL: God's love is a home for all.

One: Today we light the candle of love
to remind us of this truth.
**ALL: May it burn brightly in this space
and even brighter in our hearts.**

“Light One Candle To Watch For Messiah”

*Wayne L. Wold (1984); Yiddish folk song
© 1984 Fortress Press | Glory to God #85*

1. Light one candle to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.
He shall bring salvation to Israel,
God fulfills the promise.

2. Light two candles to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.
He shall feed the flock like a shepherd,
gently lead them homeward.

3 Light three candles to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.
Lift your heads and lift high the gateway
for the King of glory.

4. Light four candles to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.
He is coming, tell the glad tidings.
Let your light be shining.

"No Wind At The Window"

John L. Bell (1992); Irish melody

© 1992 WGRG, Iona Community | Glory to God #101

1. No wind at the window; no knock on the door;
No light from the lamp stand, no foot on the floor;
No dream born of tiredness, no ghost raised by fear:
Just an angel and a woman and voice in her ear.

2. "O Mary, O Mary, don't hide from my face.
Be glad that you're favored and filled with God's grace.
The time for redeeming the world has begun,
And you are requested to mother God's Son."

3. "This child must be born that the kingdom might come:
Salvation for many, destruction for some;
Both end and beginning, both messages and sing:
Both victor and victims, both yours and divine."

4. No payment was promised, no promises made;
No wedding was dated, no blueprint displayed.
Yet Mary, consenting to what none could guess,
Replied with conviction, "Tell God I say, Yes."

"People Look East"

Eleanor Farjeon (1928)

Glory to God #105

1. People, look east. The time is near
Of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
Trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the guest, is on the way.

Continued in the next column

2. Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
One more seed is planted there:
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
That in course the flower may flourish.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the rose, is on the way.

3. Birds, though you long have ceased to build,
Guard the nest that must be filled.
Even the hour when wings are frozen
God for fledging time has chosen.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the bird, is on the way.

4. Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim
One more light the bowl shall brim,
Shining beyond the frosty weather,
Bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the star, is on the way.

5. Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
With the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

"When Out Of Poverty Is Born"

words ©Kathryn Galloway (b. 1952)

set to the tune of Kingsfold

1 When out of poverty is born
a dream that will not die,
and landless, weary folk find strength
to stand with heads held high,
it's then we learn from those who wait
to greet the promised day,
'The Lord is coming; don't lose heart.
Be blest: prepare the way!'

2 When people wander far from God,
forget to share their bread,
they find their wealth an empty thing,
their spirits are not fed.
For only just and tender love
the hungry soul will stay.
And so God's prophets echo still
'Be blest: prepare the way!'

3 When God took flesh and came to earth,
the world turned upside down,
and in the strength of woman's faith
the Word of Life was born.
She knew that God would raise the low,
it pleased her to obey.
Rejoice with Mary in the call,
'Be blest: prepare the way!'