



Welcome to Advent at Epworth! Our Advent Sermon series is entitled: “Heaven and Nature Sing” which celebrates the 300th anniversary of the beloved hymn “Joy to the World.” Each week we will look at a different type of joy represented in the hymn. This week as we sing and anticipate the birth of our Savior, we will look at loving joy. What does it mean to hear the prophet’s message of hope in unexpected places? How do we find joy in repeating a mantra or song of joy? In the midst of a busy season and a world clamoring for our attention, God gives us signs of joy and love. Keep joining us for worship this Advent, as God becomes real in our lives.

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VISION: Exploring Faith, Embracing Community
MISSION: Inviting All, Finding Your Place, Connecting to God, Demonstrating Care

☞ WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY ☞

☞ GATHER ☞

Expansion of our Hearts “Repeat the Sounding Joy: Loving Joy” Advent II

We gather together to worship the One Who is Joy and as we come together, our hearts are expanded. We remember that the heavens declare God’s praise as the sun rises and light multiplies. And we witness that all of nature (including us) yearns to reach and expand toward the Light so that all might know joy.

Praise Gathering LIGHT OF THE WORLD

The world waits for a miracle, the heart longs for a little bit of hope,
O come, O come, Emmanuel.

A child prays for peace on earth, and she’s callin’ out from a sea of hurt,
O come, O come, Emmanuel. And can you hear the angels singing...

Glo-o-ry to the light of the world, Glo-o-ry the light of the world is here.

The drought breaks with the tears of a mother, a baby’s cry is the sound of love,
come down, come down, Emmanuel.

He is the song for the suffering, He is Messiah, the prince of peace has come,
He has come, Emmanuel.

Glo-o-ry to the light of the world. (4X)

For all who wait, for all who hunger, for all who’ve prayed, for all who wonder.
Behold your King, behold Messiah, Emmanuel, Emmanuel.

*Glo-o-ry to the light of the world. Glo-o-ry to the light of the world. Glo-o-ry to the light of the world.
Behold your king, behold Messiah, Emmanuel, Emmanuel.*

The world waits for a miracle, the heart longs for a little bit of hope,
O come, O come, Emmanuel. ¹

Welcome, Announcements **(No Passing the Peace here)**

Gwen

Focusing on Loving Joy

Gwen: Last week, we began our worship series celebrating the 300th anniversary of the beloved hymn, “Joy to the World.” We focused on “hopeful joy” and began to prepare room in our lives for more joy, even when not all is right with the world. This week, we remember that “repeating the sounding joy,” as the hymn suggests, is the way in which the reverberations of love are spread throughout the world. And so we raise our praise today in order to repeat what all creation is saying, “God loves you.”

[theme song is sung as people bring in sprigs of greenery to add to the space and the family/individuals who are lighting the second candle come in with the flame]

[Advent Candle Readers come to the wreath]

Heaven and Nature Sing...Chuck Bell

Congregation echoes

Sing a new song to the Lord. Lift your hearts with gratitude

Sing a new song to the Lord. Lift your hearts with gratitude

And Joy, Loving Joy

Your steadfast love and faithfulness is ever present in our lives.

Your steadfast love and faithfulness is ever present in our lives.

With Joy, Loving Joy

Advent Readers

Andy Brangenberg & Jeff McGuire

Make a joyful noise to the Beloved all the earth; break forth into grateful song and sing praises! Yes, sing songs of praise extolling Love’s way; lift up your hearts with gratitude and joy!

We light the second candle on the Advent Wreath symbolizing Love. Let us pray:

Holy God, you are the source of love. You are the joy that runs deep and wide underneath all of life. You are the one that helps us reach out in love, especially to those whose fear makes it hard for them to love. Help us when our fear gets in the way of joining the chorus of joy.

P: Let us repeat the sounding joy in our hearts this day.

Let us repeat the sounding joy in our church this day.

Let us repeat the sounding joy in the world this day...in the name of Love. Amen.

Song

We sing. We sing. Joy to the World. Heaven and nature sing

Joy to the World. Heaven and nature sing. With Joy. Loving Joy

Vicky: You are invited to pass the peace by saying, “May you have loving joy” to the people around you.

*Passing the Peace of Christ

*Opening Song

OPEN UP THE HEAVENS

We waited for this day, we're gathered in Your name, calling out to you.
Your glory like a fire, awakening desire, will burn our hearts with truth.

You're the reason we're here. You're the reason we're singing.

Open up the heavens; we wanna see You.

Open up the floodgates, a mighty river flowing from Your heart, filling ev'ry part of our praise.

Your presence in this place, Your glory on our face, we're looking to the sky.
Descending like a cloud, You're standing with us now. Lord, unveil our eyes.

You're the reason we're here. You're the reason we're singing. (Chorus 2X)

Show us, show us Your glory. Show us, show us Your power.

Show us, show us Your glory, Lord. (repeat)

Into CHORUS: We wanna see You, we wanna see You! (Chorus 2X) TAG: We sing, sing! ²

✠ RECEPTION OF GOD'S WORD ✠

Children's Celebration

Esther Downes

GLORY (LET THERE BE PEACE)

One star burns in the darkness, shines with the promise: Emmanuel.
One child born in the stillness, living within us: Emmanuel.

We're singing glory, glory; let there be peace, let there be peace.

Singing glory, glory; let there be peace, let it start in me.

One voice speaks for the voiceless, hope for the hopeless: Emmanuel.

One love bring us together, now and forever: Emmanuel. {Chorus}

Do not be afraid, His love is strong enough to save us.

Nothing stands in the way, His love is strong enough to lead us. {Repeat} {Chorus twice}

TAG: *Let there be peace, let it start in me.* ³

Reader:

Cher Stout

The prophet Isaiah offers a vision of radical love – the wolf and the lamb living together and being led by an innocent child. Can we lift our voices to joyfully and confidently proclaim this chorus of well-being for the world?

Old Testament Lesson

Isaiah 11:1-10 (Common English Bible)

A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse; a branch will sprout from his roots.

The LORD's spirit will rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of planning and strength, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the LORD.

He will delight in fearing the LORD. He won't judge by appearances, nor decide by hearsay. He will judge the needy with righteousness, and decide with equity for those who suffer in

the land.

He will strike the violent with the rod of his mouth; by the breath of his lips he will kill the wicked.

Righteousness will be the belt around his hips, and faithfulness the belt around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat; the calf and the young lion will feed together, and a little child will lead them.

The cow and the bear will graze.

Their young will lie down together, and a lion will eat straw like an ox.

A nursing child will play over the snake's hole; toddlers will reach right over the serpent's den.

They won't harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain.

The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the LORD, just as the water covers the sea.

On that day, the root of Jesse will stand as a signal to the peoples.

The nations will seek him out, and his dwelling will be glorious.

And then we hear from John the Baptist that the reverberations of love and joy in the world start with the change in our own hearts toward the reign of God's love. Please stand for the reading of the Gospel.

***Gospel Lesson**

Matthew 3:1-15

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers!

Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance.

Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.

John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

Brothers and Sisters

This is the Word of God for the People of God.

§ Thanks be to God

Sermon

Heaven and Nature Sing: Loving Joy

Rev. Vicky Starnes

☞ TRANSFORMATION OF OUR LIVES ☞

Sharing of Joys and Concerns & Morning Prayer

Gwen

The Lord's Prayer

Sung Responsively

FWS 2278

☞ THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT ☞

Introduction

Vicky

Brothers and sisters in Christ:

Through the Sacrament of baptism we are initiated into Christ's holy Church.

We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation through water and the Spirit.

All this is God's gift, offered to us without price.

Lay Leader: I present these persons today for baptism:

Gwen

Jack Stephen Buckingham, child of Kellie Jameson and Austin Buckingham

Vienna Mento, child of Justin and Heather Mento

Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith

Vicky

On behalf of the whole Church, I ask:

Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness,

reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?

§ I do.

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you

to resist evil, injustice, and oppression

in whatever forms they present themselves?

§ I do.

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior,

put your whole trust in His grace,

and promise to serve Him as our Lord,

in union with the Church which Christ has opened

to people of all ages, nations, and races?

§ I do.

Will you nurture these children in Christ's holy Church,

that by teaching and example they may be guided to

accept God's grace for themselves,

to profess their faith openly and to lead a Christian life?

§ I will.

To the congregation

Do you, as Christ's body, the Church, reaffirm both your rejection of sin

and your commitment to Christ?

§ We do.

Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include these persons

now before you in your care?

§ We will

With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround Jack and Vienna with a community of love and forgiveness that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others. We will pray for them, that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.

Thanksgiving over the Water

Vicky

The Lord be with you.

§ And also with you.

Let us pray.

Eternal Father: when nothing existed but chaos, You swept across the dark waters and brought forth light.

In the days of Noah You saved those on the ark through water.

After the flood you set in the clouds a rainbow. When you saw your people as slaves in Egypt, You led them to freedom through the sea. Their children you brought through the Jordan To the land which you promised.

§ Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Tell of God's mercy each day.

In the fullness of time you sent Jesus, nurtured in the water of a womb.

Vicky

He was baptized by John and anointed by your spirit.

He called his disciples to share in the baptism of his death and resurrection and to make disciples of all nations.

§ Declare his works to the nations, His glory among all the people.

Pour out your Holy Spirit to bless this gift of water and Jack and Vienna who will receive it, to wash away their sin and clothe them in righteousness throughout their life, that, dying and being raised with Christ, they may share in His final victory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. §Amen.

**Baptism with Laying on of Hands – Jack Stephen, Vienna*

I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. §Amen.

The Holy Spirit work within you, (Jack, Vienna)
that being born through water and the Spirit,
you may be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Commendation and Welcome *to the congregation*

Vicky & Gwen

Now it is our joy to welcome our new *brother and sister* in Christ.

§ Through baptism you are incorporated by the Holy Spirit into God's new creation and made to share in Christ's royal priesthood. We are all one in Christ Jesus. With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you as a baptized member of the family of Christ.

Members of the household of God, we commend Jack and Vienna to your love and care. Do all in your power to increase their faith, confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

§ We give thanks for all that God has already given you and we welcome you in Christian love. As members together with you in the body of Christ and in this congregation of The United Methodist Church, we renew our covenant faithfully to

participate in the ministries of the church by our prayers, our presence, our witness, our gifts, and our service, that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

The God of all grace, who has called us to eternal glory in Christ, establish you and strengthen you by the power of the Holy Spirit, that you may live in grace and peace.

Lighting of the Candle

(Vicky will take Jack and Vienna into the congregation as Gwen helps their parents light a candle, have a member give them a blanket that has been knitted for them, and bring them back as we continue.)

Congregation Response

GOD CLAIMS YOU

FWS 2249

(refrain) Jack, Vienna, God claims you, God helps you, protects you, and loves you, too.

We this day do all agree a child of God you'll always be. *(Refrain)*

We your family love you so, we vow to help your faith to grow. *(Refrain)*

We are here to say this day that we will help you on your way. *(Refrain)*

Invitation to Offering

Please sign the blue Connections Pad and pass it down the row.

Vicky

Offerings are given through cash and check, on-line giving, Texting at 302-488-0038

and by using our Giving Kiosk in the main lobby. There are Giving Cards in the pews to place in the plate, if you wish

Bless your heart for supporting our ministries!

Offertory:

LIGHT A CANDLE

Light a candle for the old man who sits staring out a frosty windowpane.

Light a candle for the woman who is lonely and ev'ry Christmas it's the same,
for the children who need more than presents can bring.

Light a candle. Light the dark. Light the world. Light a heart or two.

Light a candle for me; I'll light a candle for you.

Light a candle for the homeless and the hungry: a little shelter from the cold.

Light a candle for the broken and forgotten. May the season warm the soul.

Can we open our hearts to shine through the dark. {Chorus}

And in this special time of year may peace on earth surround us here
and teach us there's a better way to live.

And with every flame that burns we must somehow learn

that love's the greatest gift that we could ever give. {Chorus 2X}

TAG: Light a candle for me; I'll light a candle for you. (2X)⁺

☞ COMPASSION FOR THE WORLD ☞

Connecting to Joy can compel us to want this connection for all beings. We leave this place "with passion" (com-passion) for adding our love, peace, hope, and joy to the world.

Benediction: And so, my friends, may you be blessed with a Loving Joy that reverberates deep in your soul, so that whatever life brings, you are inspired to repeat the good news that there are better ways of looking at the world, being in the world, and bringing love to the world.

Benediction Song

We're Gonna Bring Joy to the World

Joy! Hope! Peace! Love! We're gonna bring joy to the world, hope to the world.

Peace to the world, and love for everyone! God's Joy in our hearts! God's Hope in our hearts!
God's Peace in our hearts! God's love... God's Son in our hearts!

Sending Forth

RISE UP AND PRAISE HIM

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;
Let the people of God sing His praise all over the land.
Everyone in the valley come and lift your voice.
All those on the mountaintop be glad and shout for joy!

*(refrain1) Rise up and praise Him, He deserves our love. Rise up and praise Him, worship the Holy One.
With all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might, Rise up and praise Him! (verse)*

*(refrain 2) Rise up and praise Him, He deserves our love. Rise up and praise Him, worship the Holy One.
With all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. (refrain 1)*

Tag: Rise up and praise Him! Rise up and praise Him! ⁵

**Please stand as you are able; § congregational response.*

Bulletins for the month of December are sponsored in honor of Denny's birthday, 12/14, and granddaughter, Sarah's birthday, 12/16, by Laurel St. Germain.

Chancel Flowers are given to the glory of God and:

- ❖ In memory of their Parents by Andy Brangenberg & David Hagelin;
- ❖ In memory of her late husband, Roger Pool, by Joyce Pool.

Stephen Ministers wearing blue name badges will be at each service if anyone in the Epworth family wants to talk about any life challenges.

Our Advent liturgy and special music comes from the Marcia McFee 2019 Advent Series.

Assisting with today's Service

- Acolyte* Bianca Camiolo
- Sight & Sound* Sharon Wert, Josh Megee, Arne Jerfsten, Karen Kaufman, Sofia Tamburello
- Ushers* Head Usher: Jim Blakeslee
Usher Coordinator – Worship Pathway:
9:30: Bob & Marilyn Smith, Mark & Ginny Harbold, James Floyd, Annette Predeaux

Worship Resources

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¹ *Light of the World*: Lauren Daigle, Paul Mabury & Paul Duncan ©2013 Song / ATV Publishing.

² *Open Up the Heavens*: Jason Ingram, Stuart Garrard, Andi Rozier, James MacDonald & Meredith Andrews ©2012 Song/ATV Music Publishing LLC

³ *Glory (Let There Be Peace)*: Chris Stevens, Matt Maher & Rachel Taylor Popadic ©2016 Meaux Mercy

⁴ *Light a Candle*: Joel Lindsay & Wayne Haun; ©1999 Paragon Music Copr.

⁵ *Rise Up and Praise Him*: Paul Baloche and Gary Sadler ©1996 Integrity's Hosanna! Music.

Ministers: The Church Family... *Lay Leader:* Gwen Osborne

Senior Pastor: Rev. Vicky Starnes ... *Associate Pastor:* Rev. Todd Shultz

Director of Music Ministries: Doug Yetter ... *Choir Accompanist:* Linda Hess ... *Coordinator of Caring Ministries:* Mickie McManamon

Manager of Facilities & Technologies: Kenneth Mahan ... *Office Manager:* Darlene Ford ... *ASL Interpreter:* Sandy Davis

Special Projects: Debbie Hunt ... *Administrative Assistant:* Diana Young ... *Sound Tech:* Josh Megee

Preschool Director: Betsy Plowman ... *Nursery:* Cathy Crawford ... *Cemetery Superintendent:* Jay Stevenson

Custodian: Wanda Hudson ... *Maintenance:* Mike Harrigan...*Lead Interpreter:* Sandy Davis
