



The Life of Christmas Present: Look Upon Me

**Order of Worship
December 11, 2022
Third Sunday of Advent**

GATHERING AND PRAISE

Welcome

Prelude

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

***Opening Prayer**

Dan Ensor

Holy Living God, Blessed Jesus, Guiding Spirit, we come open to your gift of the present moment, knowing that every heartbeat and breath is your gift of love bestowed upon us. Open us to your miracle just begun and in this season transform us into those whose giving brings love to a turbulent world. Open us to you, to each other, and to the voices no one hears so that your reign of mercy, justice, and love can be made known to all. Amen.

***Hymn**

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

UMH 216

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Passing the Peace of Christ

Dan Ensor

Lighting the Candle of Joy

The Robért Family

The Lord's Highway

Isaiah 35:1-10, psalm 146:5-10

Reader One: "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing . . . A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray . . . And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isaiah 35:1-2, 8, 10 NRSV).

Reader Two: The prophet Isaiah tells us about the joy of ascending to God's house. The prophet tells us to imagine being set free, being unburdened, being released to live, to fully

live in the grace and wonder of life itself, surrounded by those who love us like no one else. And then he tells us that the journey to get there is just as much a joy.

Reader One: The Psalmist says “Happy are these whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord . . . who made heaven and earth . . . who keeps faith . . . who executes justice . . . gives food . . . sets prisoners free . . . opens eyes . . . lifts up . . . watches over . . . upholds . . . The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord!” (Psalm 146 NRSV)

Reader Two: We light these candles, the candle of joyous hope, of proclaimed peace, and of deep and everlasting joy, as a sign that we are those who walk with a skip in our step because we can see the destination, and it is pure joy. We are ascending to God’s promise.

Sung Response

Light the Advent Candle
Verse 3

FWS 2090

**Light the Advent candle, three; think of heavenly harmony;
Angels singing “peace on earth” at the blessed Savior’s birth.
Candle, candle burning bright, shining in the cold winter night;
Candle, candle burning bright, fill our hearts with Christmas light.**

Ministry of Music

Child of the Poor/What Child Is This?

Choir

Old Testament Reading

Deuteronomy 15:7-8

Dan Ensor

⁷ Now if there are some poor persons among you, say one of your fellow Israelites in one of your cities in the land that the Lord your God is giving you, don’t be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward your poor fellow Israelites. ⁸ To the contrary! Open your hand wide to them. You must generously lend them whatever they need.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 2:1-18

Dan Ensor and Ric Humphreys

Coming of the Magi

² After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. ² They asked, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We’ve seen his star in the east, and we’ve come to honor him.”

³ When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. ⁴ He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They said, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

⁶ *You, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah,*

*because from you will come one who governs,
who will shepherd my people Israel.”*

⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you’ve found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him.” ⁹ When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. ¹¹ They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

Escape to Egypt

¹³ When the magi had departed, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon search for the child in order to kill him.” ¹⁴ Joseph got up and, during the night, took the child and his mother to Egypt. ¹⁵ He stayed there until Herod died. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: *I have called my son out of Egypt.*

Murder of the Bethlehem Children

¹⁶ When Herod knew the magi had fooled him, he grew very angry. He sent soldiers to kill all the children in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding territory who were two years old and younger, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. ¹⁷ This fulfilled the word spoken through Jeremiah the prophet:

¹⁸ *A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping and much grieving.
Rachel weeping for her children,
and she did not want to be comforted,
because they were no more.*

This is a Word of God for the people of God.
Thanks be to God.

Sermon

The Life of Christmas Present: Look Upon Me

Pastor Debra

Preparation for Prayer

Emmanuel, Emmanuel

UMH 204

Morning Prayer

Pastor Debra

The Lord’s Prayer

Offertory Invitation

Dan Ensor

Even in difficult times we remember that God has done great things for us. We choose to live our lives in hope, counting on the goodness of God in every age. As a sign of our trust in God, we share our gifts this morning, strengthening the ministry of this church and the United Church of Christ as we seek together to extend hope and summon peace. Let us gather gifts together and present them as an offering to God.

Worship with Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory

The Coventry Carol

**Doxology*

***Praise God who blesses everyone!
Praise Jesus Christ, who is to come!
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise Spirit, making Three-in-One!
All praise the miracle begun!
Alleluia! Alleluia!***

**Prayer of Dedication*

Dan Ensor

Generous God,

we give you thanks for all you have given us

and we offer our gifts

for the sake of being your hands and feet as the Body of Christ.

Open us to even more ways to give

so that we might look upon the world with compassion. Amen.

GOING FORTH TO SERVE

Closing Hymn

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

UMH 213

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Benediction

Pastor Debra

There's a little Scrooge in each of us
wanting to turn away from the ugliness of poverty, violence and hatred in the world.
This week may you be visited by surprising joy that calls you
to joyous acts of compassion.
And when you feel it, even if for just a fleeting moment,
know the miracle of Christmas has just begun in you, for the sake of the whole world!

May you be blessed by our God who loves you deeply;
by Jesus, the true gift of God to each of us—this season and in all our days;
and by the Spirit who with you all the time!

Postlude

Joy, Joy, Joy

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

*Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming,
As those of old have sung.
It came, a floweret bright,
Amid the cold of winter,
When half spent was the night.*

*Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
The rose I have in mind;
With Mary we behold it,
The Virgin Mother kind.
To show God's love aright,
She bore to us a Savior,
When half spent was the night.*

*O Flower, whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,
Dispel in glorious splendor
The darkness everywhere.
True man yet very God,
From sin and death now save us,
And share our every load.*

Emmanuel, Emmanuel

*Emmanuel, Emmanuel,
His name is called Emmanuel.
God with us,
revealed in us,
his name is called Emmanuel.*

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

*Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates;
behold, the King of glory waits;
the King of kings is drawing near;
the Savior of the world is here!*

*2 Fling wide the portals of your heart;
make it a temple, set apart
from earthly use for heaven's employ,
adorned with prayer and love and joy.*

*3 Redeemer, come, with us abide;
our hearts to thee we open wide;
let us thy inner presence feel;
thy grace and love in us reveal.*

*4 Thy Holy Spirit lead us on
until our glorious goal is won;
eternal praise, eternal fame
be offered, Savior, to thy name!*