



**December 24, 2023  
Fourth Sunday in Advent**

### **GATHERING AND PRAISE**

#### **Welcome**

Pastor Larry

#### **Prelude**

*Once in Royal David's City*

Gauntlett

*The prelude signals the beginning of our sacred time together. During the prelude, you are invited to prepare your heart for worship by focusing your attention upon God.*

#### **\*Call to Worship**

Quinn Hetherington

L: Stop. Listen. Pay attention. Love is coming near.

**ALL: We wait in the love of the coming Messiah that transforms us.**

L: The Hope Bringer, Peace Maker, Joy Sustainer grows in a womb, preparing to be born among us.

**ALL: We wait in the love of the coming Messiah that transforms us.**

L: With Mary, we long for the coming of the Child who will transform the world, bringing justice where injustice reigns, fullness where hunger persists, and favor to the ones the world calls lowly.

**ALL: We wait in the love of the coming Messiah that transforms us.**

L: So let us join our voices and our lives in magnifying God, our Savior!

**ALL: We come to wait and to declare the coming of the Love that transforms us!**

**Amen.**

#### **\*Opening Prayer**

Quinn Hetherington

Even now—yes, even in this very moment,  
God comes to us,

bringing hope,  
bringing forgiveness,  
bringing grace as freely offered gifts to us.  
May we open our hearts to the God who is with us,  
and receive the gifts which have been offered to us.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.

### **Lighting of the Fourth Candle in the Advent Wreath: Love**

The Hubbuch Family

**Reader 1:** When the angel Gabriel visited Mary, announcing God's plan for her to conceive and give birth to the Messiah, "Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'" (Luke 1:34) And yet, only a few months later, Mary sings to Elizabeth, My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name (Luke 1:46-49).

**Reader 2:** We, like Mary, hear God's call to be part of making God's dream for our salvation and flourishing a reality, and we question, "How can this be? I am only..." Yet, like Mary, the "onlys" that make us hesitate are gifts God can and will use as God's love transforms us into bearers of good news.

**Congregation:** We wait as people who have encountered divine Love that disrupts the status quo and ushers us into abundant life marked by mutual love and peace that flows from the flourishing of all people.

**Reader 1:** We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, our just peace, our fierce joy, and the love that transforms us. May Love grow within us, transforming us into bold witnesses of God's salvation with our voices and our lives. Amen.

### **\* Hymn**

*Angels from the Realms of Glory*

UMH 220

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### **\*Passing the Peace of Christ**

Quinn Hetherington

Therefore, since we are people who have encountered God's unfailing love let us offer one another signs of love and reconciliation.

### **Children's Time**

Pastor Larry

### **Ministry of Music**

*Do You Hear What I Hear?*

Choir

## PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

### **Prayer for Understanding**

*All Praying*

Quinn Hetherington

**Holy Spirit, Holy Word,  
may your love leap within us  
and your stories seal themselves to our hearts.  
As we prepare to welcome Jesus Christ,  
may we first welcome your wisdom to our worship. Amen.**

### **I John 4:7-12**

<sup>7</sup> Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup> This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

### **Response to the Word**

The Word of God for the people of God.

**Thanks be to God!**

### **Hymn**

*Love Came Down at Christmas*

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### **Sermon**

“Gifts that Won’t Break: Love”

Pastor Larry

### **The Apostle’s Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth;  
And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried;\*  
the third day he rose from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come to judge the quick 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.

**Morning Prayer**

Pastor Larry

**Offertory Invitation**

Quinn Hetherington

In this busy season, our most important preparations will happen here in our hearts when we make a way for God to come into our lives, when we “prepare the way of the Lord.” During our preparations, we bring gifts to share so that God’s love will shine brightly through the ministry of this church and in our own lives as well. Let us continue to worship by receiving our tithes, offerings, and gifts.

**Worship with Our Tithes and Offerings**

*Offertory*

*What Child Is This?*

English Carol

*\*Doxology*

*Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow*

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;***

***Praise God, all creatures here below:***

***Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts!***

***Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!***

***Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!***

*\*Prayer of Dedication*

Quinn Hetherington

**Gracious and Generous God: We offer our gifts to you, knowing that the energy exerted in our giving is tiny compared to what we have expended finding the gifts for our families and friends. You have given us a glimpse of the gift you truly seek in the angel’s conversation with Mary: when told that she would give birth to our savior, she simply said, “Yes, let it be according to your word.” May that affirmation of faith and obedience be the gift we offer this day. In Christ, we pray. Amen.**

**GOING FORTH TO SERVE**

**\* Closing Hymn**

*There is a Song in the Air*

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**\*Benediction**

Pastor Larry

**\*Choral Benediction**

*O Little Town of Bethlehem*

**O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!**

**\*Postlude**

*Hark the Glad Sound*

Hawets

**ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY**

*Angels from the realms of glory,  
wing your flight o'er all the earth;  
ye who sang creation's story  
now proclaim Messiah's birth:*

***Refrain:***

***Come and worship, come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn king.***

*2 Shepherds, in the field abiding,  
watching o'er your flocks by night,  
God with us is now residing;  
yonder shines the infant light: [Refrain]*

*3 Sages, leave your contemplations,  
brighter visions beam afar;  
seek the great Desire of nations;  
ye have seen his natal star: [Refrain]*

*4. Saints, before the altar bending,  
watching long in hope and fear;  
suddenly the Lord, descending,  
in his temple shall appear: (Refrain)*

## LOVE CAME DOWN AT CHRISTMAS

*Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas; star and angels gave the sign.*

*Worship we the Godhead, Love incarnate, Love divine;  
worship we our Jesus, but wherewith for sacred sign?*

*Love shall be our token; love be yours and love be mine;  
love to God and all men, love for plea and gift and sign.*

## THERE'S A SONG IN THE AIR

*There's a song in the air!  
There's a star in the sky!  
There's a mother's deep prayer  
and a baby's low cry!  
And the star rains its fire  
while the beautiful sing,  
for the manger of Bethlehem  
cradles a King!*

*2. There's a tumult of joy  
o'er the wonderful birth,  
for the virgin's sweet boy  
is the Lord of the earth.  
Ay! the star rains its fire  
while the beautiful sing,  
for the manger of Bethlehem  
cradles a King!*

*3. In the light of that star  
lie the ages impearled;  
and that song from afar  
has swept over the world.  
Every hearth is aflame,  
and the beautiful sing  
in the homes of the nations  
that Jesus is King!*

*4. We rejoice in the light,  
and we echo the song  
that comes down through the night  
from the heavenly throng.  
Ay! we shout to the lovely  
evangel they bring,  
and we greet in his cradle  
our Savior and King!*