

## 12/11/22 WORSHIP SERVICE – A SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

### WELCOME – PASTOR LOIS

Good morning! Welcome to all who are here with us in person or on zoom – let us worship God in spirit and in truth as we gather on this third Sunday of Advent for a service of Lessons and Carols. We'll make generous use of the Voices Together hymnal this morning with the vast majority of the carols coming from that. All the hymn numbers are listed, to make it easier to follow along with the words, if you'd like, on the ones that just the choir sings. Thanks to Renae and the choir for leading us in the music and thanks to our high school students and many of their parents for leading us in the lessons.

As we move to a time of sharing opportunities for celebration and service I'd like to highlight the Sr. Coffee here on Friday *afternoon* this time – 2:00 p.m. The Schowalter Villa choir, led by Leland Flickinger will come and sing here, in the sanctuary. After their program we'll move to the Fellowship Hall for coffee and cookies.

Other?

Let's join together in the Call to Worship -

Leader: In the wilderness, in the dry places, in our lack, God will meet us.

**All: The redeemed will rejoice.**

Leader: JOY – like water bubbling up in the desert

JOY – like blossoms in the wilderness

JOY – like a song filling the air – the glory of the Lord on display

**All: The redeemed will rejoice**

Leader: For God will come and save and lead us home with singing.

Let's pray. O God, our deliverer; you cast down the mighty and lift up those of no account.

Like Elizabeth and Mary, who embraced one another with songs of liberation,

may we, pregnant with your Spirit,

affirm one another in hope for the world, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION – I invite you to stand as we dedicate our offerings of money

Dear God, we ask you to bless these gifts and those who've given them.

Bless also those who give the gifts of their time, their talents and their energy to the work of this church and of your world. May the gifts and the givers bring you glory and point in the direction of your son, Jesus. Amen.

### MORNING PRAYER – PASTOR CALEB

God of the universe,

We praise you for this incredible world of terror and beauty that you have fashioned.

We are in awe at the intricacy and fragility of life, at the fact that we are even here at all in our bodies, able to contemplate this incredible world and find sacred connection with You.

God of covenant and promise,

We praise you for your steadfast love for all people.

You have been at work throughout history, striving to create a people that lives out your justice and love.

You inspired the ancient hope in your Messiah, the one who would bring reconciliation of all people.

And at the fulfillment of ages, Jesus was born into a poor family, into vulnerability, the one in whom your Fullness was pleased to dwell.

We give thanks for the hope that we have in Jesus.

We give thank for this faith that connects us to one another, motivates us to embrace our neighbors, and enables us to persevere in times of struggle.

We confess that we often fail to let this faith truly animate all that we do.

We are distracted by many things, allowing the pursuits of the ego – of status, wealth, or social acceptability – take up the most of our time and energy, leaving us limited space to learn to live in radical love and grace.

We fail to seek moments of silence or reprieve to pray and to ground ourselves in your love, and discover what your voice within us is saying.

Forgive us. Keep knocking at the doors of our hearts.

You know the joys and concerns on our hearts this morning. Receive each of our prayers today, spoken and unspoken.

We pray together for all those who are dear to our hearts.

As bouts of illness continue, we pray for all those who are recovering from illness during this holiday season.

We give thanks for the recovery that Phyllis Voth has experienced, and we pray for continued recuperation back at Bethesda.

We give thanks for the music that will be shared this evening of the McPherson Brass and Elbiata Singers. We pray this music might be a blessing to those who hear it and we pray as well for the ministry of the Goessel Ministerial Alliance.

As Christmas break approaches, students are busier than ever. Give each one enjoyment and fulfillment in multiple avenues of learning. Keep them from becoming overwhelmed with stress.

We remember those for whom Christmas is bittersweet, bringing feelings of grief for loved ones that we wish could be here to celebrate with.

May all who carry emotional or physical burdens know your comfort and your strength.

We pray for the church around the world.

We pray for the growth and health of the Mennonite church in Bolivia, where there are 12 congregations and church plants in the area of Santa Cruz. We pray especially for young people as they grow in their commitments to Jesus.

We pray for displaced people in Haiti and the Dominican Republic and for the partners of MCC who are working with them. We pray for a movement toward peace in the midst of conflict and chaos in Haiti.

We give thanks for the cease-fire in Ethiopia and pray for lasting peace after years of conflict and tension. We pray for the witness of the Meseretes Kristus Church, and pray that more people would become inspired by your Prince of Peace.

Loving Father and mothering Spirit, as we recall the Great Story of your redeeming love today, from the beginning of creation to the humble birth of the Christ child, we too want to claim that same redeeming love in our own lives and in the life of this congregation.

We too are dear to your heart, and the people of this community are dear to your heart.

Let us anchor ourselves in your love. And let us be emboldened to take risks as Jesus did as we slowly discover a new way of being human.

In the name of Jesus, whose coming into the world we celebrate, Amen.

BENEDICTION – JOHN 1:1-5, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

**All: And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.**