

12-17-2023 Worship Service

Morning Prayer -

Dear God, on this third Sunday of Advent we come before you with grateful hearts. We have much to be thankful for. As we make our annual Christmas preparations, we are mindful of all of our plans – travel plans and meal plans, plans for gifts and for special times. In the midst of it all, God, we want to remember that in spite of what our culture tells us, we're celebrating the gift of a child – a child who was born into poverty and oppression. A child whose family did not have wealth or security and had to flee to find safety. This child, Jesus, is the one we are celebrating because it was he who grew up and showed us most clearly what your love looks like in action.

It's Jesus whose birth changed the world 2000 years ago and continues to change people's lives and hearts today. Thank you God, for sending Jesus to us; help us to follow his examples and to make our plans in ways that honor him and give glory to you.

O God, because we love you and trust you and want to be in relationship with you, we bring you our prayers and concerns, the longings of our hearts.

We pray for friends and loved ones who will be traveling during these busy times. We ask for safe travel mercies and for meaningful visits. We pray for those who are feeling lonely or isolated, for those who may be grieving or sad. We acknowledge that there are many for whom these holidays are difficult or painful. Send your Spirit to be especially close and comforting to them. Let them know your love and care. We pray for Steve and Sandy and their family as they grieve the loss of Steve's father Jim. We continue to pray for the Hiebert family. We pray for others who are grieving the loss of loved ones. May there be comfort in their memories and in the hope of resurrection life with Jesus.

We ask for your presence and care, gracious God, for those in our communities who live daily with fear or violence. Let your Spirit of calm and confidence come around them and give them clarity if there are hard decisions that need to be made for the sake of safety. Give them courage and determination as they seek solutions for security. God, your love for your children near and far reaches beyond all violence and the deepest fears. May your love be made known to those in parts of the world that are ravaged by war and hatred, hunger and lack. May your people all over the world be your hands and feet, your voice and action to shine your light and show your love. O God, grant peace to your hurting world. Be with leaders – local, national and world-wide, that they may be convicted by love, not greed. We pray that they would be moved more strongly to tend the needs of the people than to gain their own power and wealth.

We thank you God for the words of scripture and for the words that Rosie has to share with us this morning. May they bring us hope, courage and steadfast faithfulness as we seek to follow Jesus and honor you as your covenant people. Amen.

Offering Prayer – O God, accept these gifts as they are offered to you in love and gratitude. Bless the gifts and those who have given them that they may be used in the work of your church.

Benediction – Send us from this place, O God, inspired and encouraged by the beauty of the music, the challenge of the message and the meaning of the season. Amen.