**PREPARATION FOR THE WORD**

(**\*** those who are able are invited to stand)

**PRELUDE**

**GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE** The Lord be with you! **And also with you!**

**LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE**

Leader: Whenever we light this candle we proclaim:

**People: Christ is the Light of the world and the center of our lives.**

**ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING**

Worship Leader/Lay Leader: Over a hundred people, from the ages of two to eighty years old, were asked the question, “What brings you joy?” From the voices of different generations, hear their answers:

Adult: A clean kitchen.

Older Adult: Sand between my toes.

Child: Being outside.

Teenager: Sleeping in my own bed after a night away.

Adult: Having a camera in my hands.

Older Adult: My partner’s laugh.

Teenager: Mountain air.

Child: When my parents pick me up.

Adult: The end of my to-do list.

Older Adult: Hugs from my niece and nephew.

Teenager: Baby giggles.

Child: My cat.

Adult: Putting my hands in the garden.

Older Adult: A chord resolved.

Teenager: Stargazing.

Child: Bedtime books.

Adult: A warm cup of coffee with friends.

Older Adult: My new granddaughter.

Teenager: Lingering at the table after dinner.

Child: Time with family.

Older Adult: Today we light the candle of joy. May its light remind us of all the good news this season brings. May its light remind us of the many sources of joy in our lives, and may that joy not only draw us closer to one another, but closer to God.

Older Adult: Family of faith, what brings you joy? Amen.

**CALL TO WORSHIP** *[1 Chronicles 16 excerpts]*

Leader: O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples.

**People: Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works.**

Leader: Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

**People: Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His presence continually.**

Leader: Remember the wonderful works He has done, His miracles and the judgments He uttered.

**People: Remember His covenant forever, the word that He commanded for a thousand generations.**

Leader: Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Tell of His salvation from day to day.

**People: Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples.**

Leader: For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.

**People: Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and joy are in His place.**

**ALL: Let us worship our God in holy splendor!**

**\* HYMN** *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* GTG #88

**CALL TO CONFESSION**

Leader: A series of experiments by Princeton psychologists, Janine Willis and Alexander Todorov, taught the world that it only takes a *tenth* of a second for us to form an impression of a stranger. In other words, it only takes a tenth of a second to look at someone’s face and determine a stereotype about who they are. With decisions happening that quickly, it is not hard to imagine why we might need this moment of confession. The prayer of confession is an opportunity to slow down. We take that tenth of a second and give it room to breathe. We reflect on the decisions that we’ve made this past week and we ask for God’s mercy to be in all of them. And without fail, God wiggles God’s self into the cracks of our lives, and we are made better for it. So with that confidence, let us go to God in prayer:

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**God of Mercy, a million times a day we have the opportunity to be gracious, to assume the best in others, to give the benefit of the doubt. A million times a day we could choose the better way, but so often we don’t. Fear and greed kick in. Assumptions and insecurities take the wheel. Comparison and critique lead the charge. Forgive us for forgetting that we are descendants of Joseph. Forgive us for forgetting that grace and mercy are in our blood. Forgive us for forgetting that all belong to you. Give us the courage to love even bigger than before, and the wisdom to choose a better way. Amen.**

**SILENT PRAYERS OF CONFESSION**

**RESPONSE** *On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry*  Tune #96

Then cleansed be every life from sin; make straight away for God within,

And let us all our hearts prepare for Christ to come and enter there.

**WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

Leader: Faith of faith, hear this good news: We who have chosen wrong are given a second chance. We who have lost our way are welcomed into community. We who feel alone are seen, held, and known. This is the good news of the gospel.

**People: No matter how many times we choose wrong or lose our way, God continues to be a God of second chances, community, and love. Thanks be to God! Amen!**

**\* MUSICAL RESPONSE OF PRAISE** *Refrain from Angels We Have Heard on High*

Gloria in excelsis Deo!

**\* THE PEACE** The peace of Christ be with you! **And also with you!**

**\*** **RESPONSE** *Here I Am, Lord*

Here I am, Lord, Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.

**THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD**

**PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION**

Holy God, scripture tells us that you came to Joseph through an angel – loud and clear, impossible to miss. Scripture also tells us that Joseph listened. He rearranged his life to follow your invitation. God we long for that – *all of that*. We long to hear your voice – loud and clear, impossible to miss. We long for invitations to something more, something deeper. And we long to be like Joseph and find the courage to follow. So clean out our ears. Brush the dust off our hearts. Trace us back to our

roots – back to Joseph – who heard and followed. With gratitude we listen. Amen.

**FIRST SCRIPTURE LESSON** *Isaiah 35:1-10*OT page 623

**SECOND SCRIPTURE LESSON** *Matthew 1:18-25* NT page 1

Leader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**JESSE TREE**

**SERMON** *We Can Choose a Better Way* Rev. Becca Price

**THE RESPONSE TO THE WORD**

**\* HYMN** *A Better Way*  (see last page)

**PASTORAL PRAYER AND OUR LORD’S PRAYER**

**OFFERTORY** *Advent Prayer* by Patrick Liebergen

**\*** SONG OF THANKS *As with Gladness Men of Old*  Tune #150

As they offered gifts most rare at thy manger, rude and bare,

So may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin’s alloy,

All our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to thee, our heavenly king.

**\*** PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**\* HYMN** *My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout* GTG #100

**\* CHARGE AND BENEDICTION**

Leader: As you leave this place, may you go knowing that from generation to generation, we have been claimed and loved.

**People: From generation to generation, God has been by our side.**

Leader: From generation to generation, we are not alone.

**People: The God of yesterday and the God of tomorrow knows you by name, loves you, and calls you forth, saying, “Go be the person you are called to be, love wildly, do justice, and come back soon.”**

Leader: May it be so. Amen.

**\* UNISON AMEN**

**POSTLUDE**

**December 11, 2022 - 10:30 am**