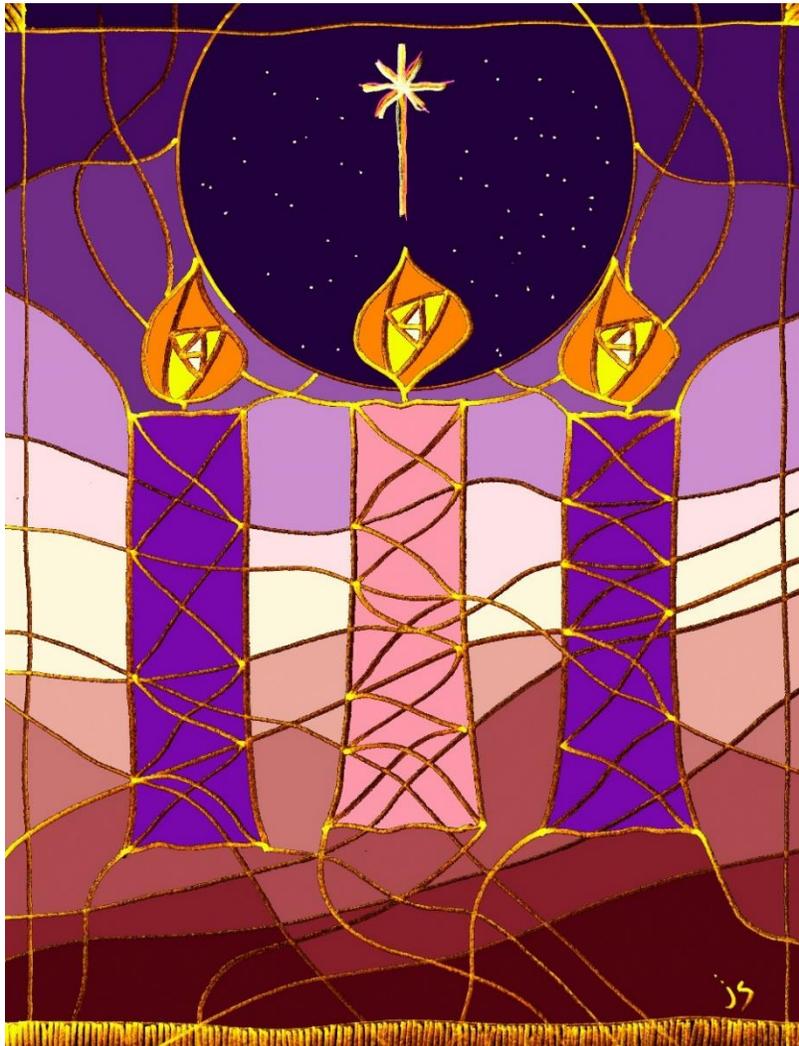


*First Presbyterian Church of Monroe  
Third Sunday of Advent  
December 13, 2020*



*“You can prepare but still it will come to you by surprise, crossing through your doorway, calling your name in greeting, turning like a child who quickens suddenly within you. It will astonish you how wide your heart will open in welcome, for the joy that finds you so ready and so still and so unprepared.”*

*Jan Richardson, “For Joy”*

# Third Sunday of Advent' "I Believe in God: Ode to Joy"

## WE GATHER

### Prelude

### Welcome

Diane Adams, Liturgist

This week, we turn to Luke's writing, which is an account in two acts: the Gospel biography of Jesus and then the story of the early church—the "Jesus community." In those days, whether Jew or Gentile, deciding to become a part of this illegal early Christian movement could bring punishment for allegiance. Surely the message in both Luke and Isaiah that the downcast, lowly, and oppressed would rise up is a welcome and inspirational account to those who heard these words then and to us today. Like the Jewish exiles of Isaiah's time and like the early Christians, we at times wonder—God where are you in our suffering? We long to hear the promise that there is a reason for joyful praise, for the good news is on the way!

### Threshold Music

"I Believe"

verse 3

*"I believe in God, I believe in God, even when, even when God is silent."*

### Prayer

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

Holy One,  
we thank you for the glimpses we catch  
of your gift of the depths of joy.  
Even in the midst of fear,  
of challenge, of struggle—  
even when we are not sure  
of your presence,  
ignite the flame of joy within us,

**People: ... that we might glow with its brilliance  
from the inside out.**

Congregation joins in singing  
**I believe in God,  
I believe in God,  
even when... even when...  
God is silent.**

*Pastor:* Help us face the silence of unknowing and embrace it as an expectant pause before joyful new beginnings.

**People: Amen.**

*Pastor:* You are invited to light the third candle of Advent, the candle of Joy.

**Opening Hymn**

“Hail to the Lord’s Anointed”

GTG 149

- 1 All hail to God’s anointed, great David’s greater Son! All hail, in time appointed, your reign on earth begun! You come to break oppression, to set the captive free, to take away transgression and rule in equity.
- 2 You come with rescue speedy to those who suffer wrong, to help the poor and needy and bid the weak be strong; to give them songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light, whose souls, condemned and dying, are precious in your sight.
- 3 You shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth; love, joy, and hope, like flowers, spring in your path to birth. Before you on the mountains shall peace, the herald, go, and righteousness in fountains from hill to valley flow.
- 4 All rulers bow before you, and gold and incense bring. All nations shall adore you; your praise all people sing. To you shall prayer unceasing and daily vows ascend. Your rule is still increasing; your rule is without end.

**Call to Confession**

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

**Prayer of Confession<sup>ii</sup>**

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

An angel spoke to Mary: “Do not be afraid!” And yet, O Lord, we find ourselves paralyzed by fear of what we do not know. Forgive us our sins, O Lord, and grant us Mary’s faith. A faith that responds to your grace through living a life of grateful praise. Let us hear the good news that Mary first heard: Light is breaking. Love is coming. Rejoice for the world will never be the same. Amen.

*Silent Confession*

**Declaration of Forgiveness**

**Passing the Peace**

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

**WE PROCLAIM**

**Children’s Time to Shine**

*“This Little Light of Mine”*

Ann Lux

**Isaiah Reading**

Diane Adams, Liturgist

*Isaiah 57: 14-19 (CEB)*

It will be said: “Survey, survey; build a road!  
Remove barriers from my people’s road!”  
The one who is high and lifted up,  
who lives forever, whose name is holy, says:  
I live on high, in holiness,

and also, with the crushed and the lowly,  
reviving the spirit of the lowly,  
reviving the heart of those who have been crushed.

I won't always accuse,  
nor will I be enraged forever.  
It is my own doing that their spirit is exhausted—  
I gave them breath!  
I was enraged about their illegal profits;  
I struck them; in rage I withdrew from them.  
Yet they went on wandering wherever they wanted.  
I have seen their ways, but I will heal them.  
I will guide them,  
and reward them with comfort.

And for those who mourn,  
I will create reason for praise:  
utter prosperity to those far and near,  
and I will heal them, says the Lord.

## **The Witness of Music**

Diane Adams, Liturgist

Each week we are presenting a musical piece to fill our worship with music and our dark nights with the light of joy. We have also been witnessing the power of music through our film documentary mid-week study that open us to lives transformed by the presence of instrument and song.

This week, Ann Orwin and our pastor, Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler will be co-hosting discussions of another amazing documentary film. This film tells the story of Ode to Joy. Beethoven, the composer of Ode to Joy, could not have imagined this musical composition ringing out around the world as a testament to an undying spirit of the people. *Following the Ninth* tells the story of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, created when the aging and deaf Beethoven himself could not hear it at all. His silence was transformed into echoes through the ages as this music was used in protest marches against evil dictators and as hope in the midst of natural disaster. We are excited about sharing this film with you. Information about the Wednesday evening film documentary study of "Following the Ninth" was emailed in the mid-week bulletin on the afternoon December 9<sup>th</sup>. If you are not on our mailing list you may email or call the church office and asked to be added to our email list. You may also simply request the Zoom link for the film documentary study this coming Wednesday, December 16<sup>th</sup>.

On this third Sunday of Advent, we present to you a rallying call, much like Mary's Magnificat which we will hear in our Gospel reading today. Mary lifts her voice and says that God will show mercy and lift up the lowly. This simple song overlays the idea that we must resist the injustices of the world and, at the same time, pray for our enemies, welcome the stranger, and show love to our neighbors.

**Music**

"We Resist"

by Mark A. Miller

**Gospel Reading**

*Luke 1:1-4; 26-56 (CEB)*

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

Many people have already applied themselves to the task of compiling an account of the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used what the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed down to us. Now, after having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, I have also decided to write a carefully ordered account for you, most honorable Theophilus. I want you to have confidence in the soundness of the instruction you have received...

When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?"

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son. Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible for God."

Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her."

Mary said,

“With all my heart I glorify the Lord!

In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.

He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.

Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored  
because the mighty one has done great things for me.

Holy is his name.

He shows mercy to everyone,  
from one generation to the next,  
who honors him as God.

He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones  
and lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things

and sent the rich away empty-handed.

He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,

remembering his mercy,

just as he promised to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to Abraham’s descendants forever.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months, and then returned to her home.

**Sermon**

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

## **WE RESPOND**

### **Litany of Belief**

Diane Adams, Liturgist

In times when humanity disappoints,

when even our thoughts and behaviors disappoint,

it is important to call out, name and own, the consequences of our wrongs.

In times of distress it is a prophetic act to call out,

name and own, our belief in our hope for tomorrow.

*Leader:* I believe that we are sometimes silent in the face of injustice AND

***People:* I believe that we are capable of raising our voices and insisting of fairness and goodness for all people.**

*Leader:* I believe that we are afraid of feeling deeply, and thus diminishing our joy AND

***People:* I believe that the love of community connects us and the deep joy of community is present even in hard times.**

*Leader:* I believe that we wonder if we can make a difference AND

***People:* I believe that small acts of kindness make a difference and that we can make a difference in our world every day.**

*Leader:* We believe, even when we are discouraged.

***People:* We believe, that when we are discouraged, raising our voices for justice offers us joy!**

### **Prayers in the Stillness**

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

Pastor: I invite you to get in a comfortable position of rest.

I invite you to get as quiet and still as you can.

I invite you to a deep breath and a deep listening posture—  
perhaps eyes closed—

or fixed on a candle—

or focused on the visual images that will be shared during the music

as we prepare our mind, body and spirit for a time of prayer.

### **Music**

“Stillness”

Mark Miller and Lindy Thompson

The gentle pull of God  
is often lost amidst the rush  
of all the obligations which lay a claim on us.

Yet just beyond the frantic pace  
our restless feet have trod  
lie deep still pools of quietness—  
the dwelling place of God.

Meet me in the stillness, Lord  
Be the air I breathe  
Meet me in the stillness, Lord  
Free me to receive

O take me to that secret place  
where lost in wonder and in awe,  
the moment comes and I rejoice  
to be and be with God.

Meet me in the stillness, Lord  
Be the air I breathe  
Meet me in the stillness, Lord  
Free me to receive

### **The Prayers of the People The Lord’s Prayer**

*Sung Coda:* Meet me in the stillness, Lord  
Free me to receive, to receive.

### **Offering Announcement**

Diane Adams, Liturgist

## Doxology

tune of "Give Thanks" GTG 647

Believe, with a joyful heart!  
Believe, and shine your light!  
Believe, because the song we sing is sung for all!

And now let the weak say, "I am strong;"  
let the poor say, "I am rich  
because of what our God has done for us."  
Believe!

## WE GO FORTH

### Introduction to the Carol

Diane Adams, Liturgist

As you will witness in our documentary this week, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, which is the basis of the tune for our hymn "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee," has been a powerful witness to the human spirit to overcome adversity in many instances around the globe. British punk rock star, Billy Bragg, once wrote an alternative translation of the original German choral score for a school teacher to teach the children in her classroom, and it soon became a popular anthem, even being performed for the Queen. In these words, you can hear the call to resist division, to raise our voices, to "furnish every heart with joy and banish all hatred for good."

*"See now like a Phoenix rising  
from the rubble of the war  
hope of ages manifested  
peace and freedom evermore.  
Brothers, sisters stand together,  
raise your voices now as one.  
Though by history divided,  
reconciled in unison.*

*Throw off now the chains of ancient  
bitterness and enmity.  
And in hand let's walk together  
on the path of liberty.  
Hark...a new dawn is breaking;  
raise your voices now as one.  
Though by history divided,  
reconciled in unison.*

*What's to be then all my brothers,  
sisters; what is in your hearts?  
Tell me now the hopes you harbor,  
What's the task and where to start.*

... *Those speak ten million voices;  
every word is understood.  
Furnish every heart with joy  
and banish all hatred for good.*"

**Carol of Resistance**                      *"Ode to Joy"*                      *music by Ludwig van Beethoven*  
(*"Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"* GTG 611)

- 1 Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love! Hearts unfold like flowers before thee, opening to the sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt away. Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.
- 2 All thy works with joy surround thee; earth and heaven reflect thy rays; stars and angels sing around thee, center of unbroken praise. Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea, chanting bird and flowing fountain, call us to rejoice in thee.
- 3 Mortals, join the happy chorus which the morning stars began. Love divine is reigning o'er us, joining all in heaven's plan. Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife. Joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life.

**Benediction**

*Pastor:* You are invited to pick up the third candle of Advent, the candle of joy and hold it high for the Benediction.

We wait for justice  
but we do not wait to work for change;

We wait for restored health  
but we do not wait to work to heal;

We wait for wholeness  
but we do not wait to work at binding brokenness;

We wait for peace  
but we do not wait to work to eliminate hatred.

And so, my friends, like bells ringing out the news  
that the sun still shines even on cloudy days,  
fill the night left by sadness with messages of joy.  
Go into your lives humming the tunes that keep that joy alive in you  
and that spur you on in your work of justice and reconciliation.  
Raise your voices and repeat after me...  
"do not be afraid!"

**People:** "do not be afraid!" **Amen!**

**Handbell Benediction**

**Postlude**

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<sup>i</sup> Worship series design © Worship Design Studio by Marcia McFee. Used, adapted, and live-streamed with permission. [www.worshipdesignstudio.com](http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com)

<sup>ii</sup> Prayer of Confession adapted from *Call to Worship, Lectionary Aids for 2020-2021, Year B. Volume 54.1*, p.24.  
Art work by John Stuart. [www.stushieart.com](http://www.stushieart.com)

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