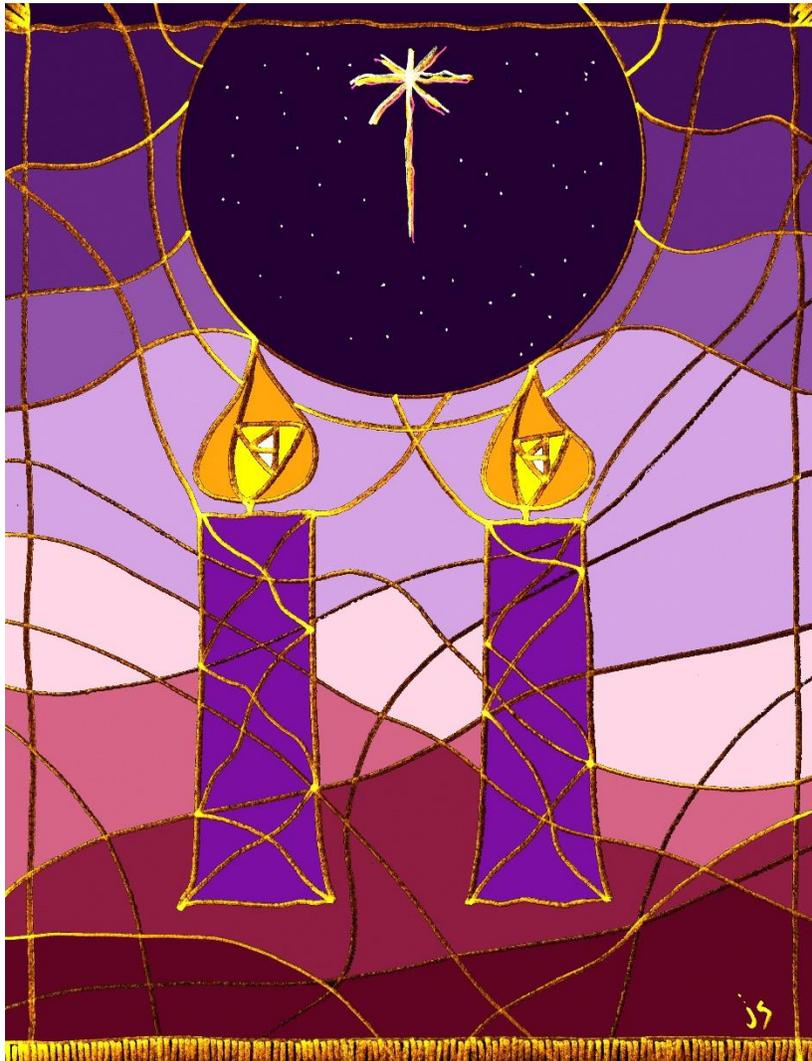


*First Presbyterian Church of Monroe
Second Sunday of Advent
December 6, 2020*



“There is no ceiling to love.”

Mildred Bangs Wynkoop

Second Sunday of Advent¹
"I Believe in Love: Daring Right Relationship"

WE GATHER

Prelude

Welcome

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

Crossing the Threshold

Diane Adams, Liturgist

In both the Gospel of Matthew and Isaiah, a messenger appears as a sign from God, heralding a new era. In each passage, the words "do not be afraid" appear...offering a clue that the messenger—whether prophet or angel—was referencing something that induced fear in the recipient. A new way of being together, of relating and loving takes courage—eschewing the present order of things so that a new and better day can be born.

Threshold Music

"I Believe"

verse 2

Prayer

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

Holy One,
we thank you for the glimpses we catch
of your gift of your daring love.
Even in the midst of fear,
of challenge, of struggle—
even when we cannot see yet a better day
when we will act like the human family we are,
ignite the flame of love within us,
**People: ... that we might glow with its brilliance
from the inside out.**

People joins in singing
**I believe in the love,
I believe in the love,
even when... even when...
I don't feel it.**

Pastor: Help us face this fear of difference and dare to see what love can do.

People: **Amen.**

Pastor: You are invited to light the second candle of Advent, the candle of Love.

Opening Hymn*"Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates"*

GTG 93

- 1 Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates; behold the King of glory waits; the King of kings is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.
- 2 Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart from earthly use for heaven's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.
- 3 Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart to thee; here, Lord, abide. Let me thy inner presence feel; thy grace and love in me reveal.

Call to Confession

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

Prayer of Confession²

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

God of the prophets, your messenger cried out "Prepare the way of the Lord." Forgive us when we fail to prepare your way. Forgive us when we have stood in your way. Forgive us when we let the challenging words of your prophets roll off our lives, rather than let them spark change. Forgive us when we walk around our neighbor in need rather than encounter a chance for compassion. Forgive us, God of the prophets, and remind us again that you love and show up in unexpected, ordinary places in spite of us. Amen.

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 7: 1-14 (CEB)

In the days of Ahaz (Jotham's son and grandson of Judah's King Uzziah), Aram's King Rezin and Israel's King Pekah (Remaliah's son) came up to attack Jerusalem, but they couldn't overpower it.

When the house of David was told that Aram had become allies with Ephraim, their hearts and the hearts of their people shook as the trees of a forest shake when there is a wind. But the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the channel of the Upper Pool, by the road to the field where laundry is washed, and say to him, 'Be careful and stay calm. Don't fear, and don't lose heart over these two pieces of smoking torches, over the burning anger of Rezin, Aram, and Remaliah's son. Aram has planned evil against you with Ephraim and Remaliah's son, saying, "Let's march up against Judah, tear it apart, capture it for ourselves, and install Tabeel's son as its king." But the Lord God says: It won't happen; it won't take place. The chief of Aram is Damascus; the chief of Damascus is Rezin (in sixty-five

more years Ephraim will be shattered as a nation); the chief of Ephraim is Samaria; and the chief of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you don't believe this, you can't be trusted."

Again, the Lord spoke to Ahaz: "Ask a sign from the Lord your God. Make it as deep as the grave or as high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I won't ask; I won't test the Lord." Then Isaiah said, "Listen, house of David! Isn't it enough for you to be tiresome for people that you are also tiresome before my God? Therefore, the Lord will give you a sign. The young woman is pregnant and is about to give birth to a son, and she will name him Immanuel.

The Witness of Music

Diane Adams, Liturgist

As we said last week, our worship series this Advent calls on the power of music that has always called humanity to a brighter tomorrow. Rather than turn away from music in sorrow, we will turn toward the story of music and deepen our appreciation of its role in healing, change, and reconciliation. Indeed, on this Sunday with "love" at the center, we can attest that probably love songs top the charts in the history of human song.

This week, Ann Orwin and our pastor, Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler will be co-hosting discussions of the documentary film, *Girls on the Wall*. Ann will facilitate the discussions. The "girls" of this documentary are juvenile offenders in prison. A drama teacher leads them in writing the story of their lives and creating a musical out of it. As they allow the process and the music to penetrate their hardened hearts, they find that their desire for love is the key to moving forward in their own healing and rehabilitation. Information about this film and small group discussions can be found in your Midweekly Bulletin and on our church website.

In this moment, we present to you an anthem called "Love Has Broken Down the Walls." This anthem has become a favorite of youth choirs across the country. Young people are showing us what it means to accept each other's diversity as a global community and we pray that this witness to neighbor love...a love of compassion and acceptance and celebration of diversity continues as time moves on.

Anthem

"Love has Broken Down the Walls"

by Mark A. Miller

Gospel Reading

Matthew 1:1-25 (CEB)

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

A record of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham:

Abraham was the father of Isaac.

Isaac was the father of Jacob.

Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.

*Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah,
whose mother was Tamar.*

Perez was the father of Hezron.

Hezron was the father of Aram.

*Aram was the father of Amminadab.
Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.
Nahshon was the father of Salmon.
Salmon was the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab.
Boaz was the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth.
Obed was the father of Jesse.
Jesse was the father of David the king.
David was the father of Solomon,
whose mother had been the wife of Uriah.
Solomon was the father of Rehoboam.
Rehoboam was the father of Abijah.
Abijah was the father of Asaph.
Asaph was the father of Jehoshaphat.
Jehoshaphat was the father of Joram.
Joram was the father of Uzziah.
Uzziah was the father of Jotham.
Jotham was the father of Ahaz.
Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah.
Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh.
Manasseh was the father of Amos.
Amos was the father of Josiah.
Josiah was the father of Jechoniah and his brothers.
This was at the time of the exile to Babylon.
After the exile to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel.
Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.
Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud.
Abiud was the father of Eliakim.
Eliakim was the father of Azor.
Azor was the father of Zadok.
Zadok was the father of Achim.
Achim was the father of Eliud.
Eliud was the father of Eleazar.
Eleazar was the father of Matthan.
Matthan was the father of Jacob.*

Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary—of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Christ. So there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen generations from the exile to Babylon to the Christ.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. When Mary his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn't want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly. As he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. She will

give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled:

*Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son,
And they will call him, Emmanuel. (Emmanuel means “God with us.”)*

When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife. But he didn't have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. Joseph called him Jesus.

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 have been taught to fear one another AND

***People:* I believe that we are capable of learning to love one another with a BIGGER...more expansive love.**

Leader: I believe that our society is built on a foundation of oppression of some over others AND

***People:* I believe that we can speak this truth and move to act in ways that balance this inequity.**

Leader: I believe that we are afraid AND

***People:* I believe that we can lean on God and each other for courage to face anything.**

Leader: We believe, even when we are discouraged.

***People:* We believe, that when we are discouraged, raising our voices for justice will loose more love in the world!**

Prayers in the Stillness

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—as we prepare for a time of prayer.

Music**"Stillness"**

by 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

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

Offering Announcement and Opportunities to "Fill the Night" with Love

Doxology *to the tune of "Give Thanks" GTG 647*

Believe, with a loving 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!

Holy Communion

Pastor: Our God, Song of the Ages, be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Pastor: It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to raise our voices with you,
tuning ourselves to you, creator of heaven and earth.

You filled the night of creation with music and light,
setting in motion the rhythms
of sunrise and sunset, of sound and silence.
You formed within us your love song
and breathed into us the breath of life.

Sometimes our voices are choked off
and we cannot find your melody.
But you keep the bass line humming,
waiting for us to rejoin the chorus.
You show up in the worst of times
offering us the way to freedom in you.
Your voice breaks through in prophets whose songs
wake us up to the kin-dom you desire.

And so,
with your people on earth
and all the company of heaven
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

[people join in singing]

***Now Mary sings her birthing song
Till every voice can sing along
And voices weak will rise up strong
Her choir is one where all belong***

Pastor: Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.
Breaking forth into light from the blessed darkness of a womb,
he brought light that illumined a path
so we could see our way to more beloved community.

Your Spirit anointed him to raise his voice...
to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the captives

and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
and to announce that the time had come
when you would save your people.
He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners
and invited us to do this too.

Born into a world of suffering, he suffered.
Born into a world of senseless death, he died.
Born into a world that needed hope, he rose,
delivering us and proclaiming light and life
the triumphal coda of life's song.

When the Lord Jesus ascended,
he promised to be with us always,
in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit.
Holy Luminary, lighting our way.

Pastor: On the night of his arrest,
he took bread, and after giving thanks to God,
he broke it, gave it to his disciples, saying:
"Take, eat; this is my body given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

[people join in singing]
***For deeper love we spread the bread
I won't be full till all are fed
Till every soul has home and bed
The rest of us can't move ahead***

Pastor: In the same way, he took the cup,
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"This is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it,
do this in remembrance of me."

[people join in singing]
***For deeper love we share the wine
I cannot taste the love divine
Till every soul has walked the line
And you've had yours like I've had mine***

Pastor: And so,
In remembrance of your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice,
in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

[people join in saying]
**Christ has died;
Christ is risen;
Christ will come again.**

Pastor: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and fruit of the vine.
Make them be for us your love and light
so that our hearts may be broken open for the world
and our lives poured out in service and in love.

[people join in singing]
**No one is saved till all are healed
As Jesus on the Mount revealed
Your life and mine forever sealed
Just like the lilies of the field**

Pastor: By your Spirit make us one with Christ,
one with each other,
and one in ministry to all the world.

Prayers of the People...

Mix our voices in harmony with each other
until we sit at the same table
and sing in the same choir
in your Kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven.

Through your Son Jesus Christ
with the Holy Spirit in your holy church,
all honor and glory is yours, almighty God,
now and forever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer (Unison)

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kin-dom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

[people join in singing as the bread is broken and cup poured]

***We follow where the Christ has led
To table that for all is spread
And no one's sitting at the head
But deeper love in wine and bread***

Prayer After Communion (Unison)

Gracious God, may we live in the unity of your Holy Spirit, and may we show forth your love to all the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord of Love. **Amen.**

WE GO FORTH

Introduction to the Carol of Resistance

Diane Adams, Liturgist

Carol of Resistance

"It Came Upon A Midnight Clear"

GTG 123

- 1 It came upon the mid-night clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold: "Peace on earth, good will to all, from heaven's all-gracious King": the world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.
- 2 Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled, and still their heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world: above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hovering wing, and ever o'er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.
- 3 Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long; beneath the heavenly hymn have rolled two thousand years of wrong; and we at war on earth hear not the tidings that they bring; O, hush the noise and cease the strife to hear the angels sing!
- 4 And you, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low, who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow, look now, for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing: O rest, beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing.
- 5 For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old, when with the ever-circling years shall come the time fore-told, when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling, and the whole world give back the song which now the angels sing.

Benediction

Pastor: I invite you to pick up the second candle of Advent, the candle of love 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 God is with us, “Emmanuel”
fill the night left by sadness with messages of love.
Go into your lives humming the tunes that keep love 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

¹ Worship series design © Worship Design Studio by Marcia McFee. Used, adapted, and live-streamed with permission. www.worshipdesignstudio.com

² Prayer of Confession adapted from *Call to Worship. Lectionary Aids for 2020-2021, Year B.*

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