

RINGING OF THE BELL

OUR FAITH IN ACTION –
ANNOUNCEMENTS,
JOYS & CONCERNS

PRELUDE

"In the Bleak Midwinter"
Music - Gustav Holst;
Words - Christina Rossetti



* CALL TO WORSHIP

Thunder in the desert!

Prepare for God's arrival!

Make the road straight and smooth, a highway fit for our God.

Justice shall march before him,

and peace shall follow his steps.

O Israel, put your hope in the living God.

The Day of the Lord is coming.

* HYMN

Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates

No. 117

Lift up your heads, O mighty gates; Behold, the King of glory waits;
The King of kings is drawing near; The Savior of the world is here!

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.

* PRAYER OF CONFESSION

On this second Sunday of Advent, this second of four Sabbaths, let us prepare with repentance, and turn back toward God who loves us.

Saving, restoring God, you untangle the twisting ways of our hearts and smooth the paths made rough by sin. Pry us free from our fears, so that we can hope again – hope for Your presence, for Your peace, for Your will to become reality in this world; through the One whose arrival is certain, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Silent Prayers of Reconciliation

* DECLARATION OF GRACE

"Comfort, comfort my people," says your God. "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and that her sins are pardoned. Yes, the LORD has punished her in full for all her

sins.” God came to us in the flesh, the Babe of Bethlehem, to show infinite love & forgiveness for all. Our sins are forgiven in the holy name of Christ, who came and will come again.

Thanks be to God!

* PASSING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

LIGHTING THE CANDLE OF PEACE

. . . We light the candle of Peace today to remind us that Christ is the Prince of Peace, the One promised from the beginning of the world.

ALL: Our peace is in God, and in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son.

SUNG RESPONSE

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

No. 131, vs. 1

It came upon the midnight clear, That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth, To touch their harps of gold;
‘Peace on the earth, good will to all, From Heaven’s all gracious King.’
The world in solemn stillness lay, To hear the angels sing.

BLESSING THE SOCKS FOR ST. NICHOLAS

HEBREW SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 40:1- 11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.
Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"
See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him;

his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

EPISTLE 2 Peter 3:8-15a

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief,
and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise,
and the elements will be dissolved with fire,
and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire?

But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him.

GOSPEL Mark 1: 1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

He proclaimed, "The One who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

WITNESS TO THE WORD

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

GIVING OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

We are so thankful for the generous and diverse gifts of our members and friends!

We know this is a difficult time for many. If you are able, we hope that you will choose to support the work of Zion United Church of Christ with your financial gifts.

*If you would like to contribute online, please go to our website,
www.zionucclowden.org, and click on the donate button.*

OFFERTORY
*DOXOLOGY

Mary, Woman of the Promise

Mary Frances Fleischaker
Tune: *Deck the Halls*

Praise to God who reigns above, Ha-lle- lu- jah
Praise to God who comes in love, Ha-lle-lu-jah
Gifts we bring for Christ our Savior, Ha - lle-lu-jah
Hope and peace, and joy forever, Ha - lle-lu-jah!

~ SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION ~

* INVITATION

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest.

Let these gifts to us be blessed.

The door to God's banquet hall is open. Enter into the joy of this feast.

* COMMUNION PRAYER

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise!

Eternal God, holy and mighty, it is truly right and our greatest joy to give you thanks and praise, and to worship you in every place where your glory abides. You comforted Your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through Whom You will also make all things new in the day when He comes to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with all the choirs of angels, and with all the faithful of every time and place, we praise Your name and join their unending hymn:

*SANCTUS (*spoken by ALL*):

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION & PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

. . . Strengthen us, O God, in the power of Your Spirit

to bring good news to the poor and lift blind eyes to sight,
to loose the chains that bind and claim your blessing for all people.

Keep us faithful in Your service until Christ comes in final victory, and we shall feast with all your saints in the joy of your eternal realm. Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is Yours, Almighty God, now and forever!

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

SHARING THE BREAD & THE CUP

Please share whatever you have gathered for your communion elements, and reflect on the gift of Christ's peace.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Just As I Am

David Niermeyer, Soloist; Joy Combs, Accompanist

*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, in this feast You have given us a foretaste of that day when all the hungry will be fed with good things.

Help us always to be alert to Your peace in our midst.

Grant this through the One whose advent is certain, whose day draws near, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

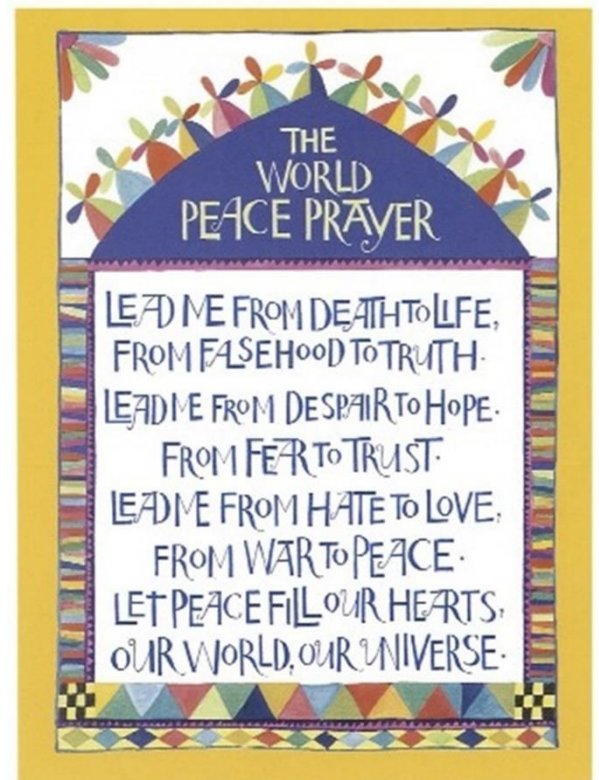
Let us pray together the World Peace prayer:

**Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth,
from despair to hope, from fear to trust.**

Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace;

Let peace fill our hearts,

let peace fill our world, let peace fill our universe.



* HYMN

Lead Us from Death to Life

No. 581

The World Peace Prayer of the refrain's text, was adapted from the Upanishads, Hindu scriptures probably written between 400 and 200 B.C.E. by Satish Kumar (dates unknown), a Jain monk. Marty Haugen composed the tune WORLD PEACE PRAYER in 1983, incorporating one of the world's oldest prayers and his own stanzas.

Text: Refrain: Upanishads, Satish Kumar; verses, Marty Haugen; Tune: Marty Haugen; © 1985, GIA Publications, Inc.

***HYMN**

"Lead Us From Death to Life"

tune: World Peace Prayer
Marty Haugen

Refrain

Lead us from death to life, from false-hood to truth, from de -
spair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to
love, from war to peace; let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our
world, let peace fill our u - ni - verse. Still all the an - gry cries,
So man - y lone - ly hearts,
Let jus - tice ev - er roll,
still all the an - gry guns, still now your peo - ple die, earth's sons and
so man - y bro - ken lives, long - ing for love to break in - to their
let mer - cy fill the earth, let us be - gin to grow in - to your
daugh ters. Let jus - tice roll, let mer - cy pour
an guish. Come, teach us love, come, teach us
peo - ple. We can be love, we can bring
down, come and teach us your way of com - pas - sion. to
peace, come and teach us your way of com - pas - sion. Refrain
peace, we can still be your way of com - pas - sion.

***BENEDICTION**

... Go in peace. Prepare the way.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

*** POSTLUDE**

"Glorify Thy Name"

Donna Adkins

**Thank you to Today's
Worship Leaders**

Organist:	Sandra Horman
Special Music:	David Niermeyer, Soloist Joy Combs, Accompanist
Liturgist:	Terry Lasack
Videographer	Julie Hoffmeier
PowerPoint:	David Niermeyer
Ministers:	All believers!
Pastor:	Rev. Susan Schneider-Adams

From Rachel Held Evans

5 Questions to Ask Yourself...

1. **When I wake up on Christmas morning, how will I be different?** How do I hope the meditations and practices of the season will shape me?
2. How can I prepare myself, my home, and my family for the arrival of Jesus in a way that nurtures a spirit of anticipation and hope?
3. Have I left enough space in the busy holiday season to pay attention, to listen, to wait, and to be surprised? **What practical steps can I take to both guard those quiet moments but also embrace divine interruptions?**
4. Consider the effects of light. It can warm and it can guide, but it can also expose and surprise. What does light in the darkness mean for the world? What does it mean for my life in this season?
5. **What does it mean to listen to the prophets in this season—not just the prophets of old, but the prophets of today?** Who is crying out for justice and peace from the margins, and what will I do to heed their calls?