



“Raise your voice... do not be afraid.” — The Messenger

Advent 4
"I Believe in the Light: Illuminating Peace"

WE GATHER

Prelude

Welcome

Crossing the Threshold

The “great light” prophesied by Isaiah in today’s text
is echoed in the first strains of John’s Gospel good news:
the light that brings peace—that saves the people from all that would extinguish it—
has been there from the beginning.
The Word is made flesh and dwells among us.
This reign is now... will we believe it?

Will we continue to put flesh on it,
embodying the peace meant for all humanity?

Reader: We see the star rising

Choir: We see the star rising

Reader: We hear the glad tidings

Choir: We hear the glad tidings

Reader: We know we are not alone

Choir: We know we are not alone

Prayer

Holy One,
we thank you for the glimpses we catch
of your gift of peace on earth.
Even in the midst of fear,
of challenge, of struggle—
even when we aren't sure that
goodwill among us can be found,
ignite the flame of peace within us,
**People: ... that we might glow with its brilliance
from the inside out.**

**I believe in the light,
I believe in the light,
that has come... that has come...
and is coming.**

Pastor: Help us face the pain of life
and embrace the assurance that light is already here, and always coming.
Amen.

Pastor: You are invited to light your Advent 4 candle of Peace at this time.

Opening Hymn

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" SttL 163

The Peace

The peace of Christ be with you
And also with you

WE PROCLAIM

Children's Time to Shine

“This Little Light of Mine”

Isaiah Reading

Isaiah 9: 2-7 (CEB)

Pastor Sue:

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.
On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.
You have made the nation great;
you have increased its joy.
They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest,
as those who divide plunder rejoice.
As on the day of Midian, you’ve shattered the yoke that burdened them,
the staff on their shoulders,
and the rod of their oppressor.
Because every boot of the thundering warriors,
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned, fuel for the fire.

Liturgist:

A child is born to us, a son is given to us,
and authority will be on his shoulders.
He will be named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be vast authority and endless peace
for David’s throne and for his kingdom,
establishing and sustaining it
with justice and righteousness
now and forever.

The Witness of Music

During the Puritan Era in England,
a number of regional medieval carols were sent underground.
Many were not rediscovered until the early twentieth century
when Cecil Sharp and Ralph Vaughan Williams began collecting them.
Vaughan Williams heard this tune sung in Sussex and published it in 1919.
The words were written by Luke Wadding, a 17th Century Irish Bishop.

Anthem: “On Christmas Night All Christians Sing”

Gospel Reading

John 1: 1-18 (CEB)

Pastor Sue:

In the beginning was the Word
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God.

The Word was with God in the beginning.
Everything came into being through the Word,
and without the Word
nothing came into being.
What came into being
through the Word was life,
and the life was the light for all people.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

Liturgist:

A man named John was sent from God.
He came as a witness to testify concerning the light,
so that through him everyone would believe in the light.
He himself wasn't the light,
but his mission was to testify concerning the light.

The true light that shines on all people
was coming into the world.
The light was in the world,
and the world came into being through the light,
but the world didn't recognize the light.
The light came to his own people,
and his own people didn't welcome him.
But those who did welcome him,
those who believed in his name,
he authorized to become God's children,
born not from blood
nor from human desire or passion,
but born from God.

Pastor Sue:

The Word became flesh
and made his home among us.
We have seen his glory,
glory like that of a father's only son,
full of grace and truth.

John testified about him, crying out, This is the one of whom I said, He who comes after me is greater than me because he existed before me.”

From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace;
as the Law was given through Moses,
so grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ.
No one has ever seen God.
God the only Son,
who is at the Father s side,
has made God known.

Sermon

Response

WE RESPOND

Litany of Belief

In times when humanity disappoints,
perhaps when even our own thoughts and behaviors disappoint,
it is an important act to call out, name and claim, the consequences of our wrongs.
And in times of distress it is a prophetic act to call out, name and claim,
our belief in peace for the world.

Leader: I believe that humans seem to have a penchant for conflict AND

***People:* I believe that we are capable of learning non-violent ways
to negotiate difference.**

I believe that we have perpetrated deep suffering upon each other AND
I believe that we can face up to the facts of privilege and work for equity.

I believe that our fear has told us that we must “win” in order to survive AND
I believe that “winning” at the cost of others can be be called out and changed.

We believe, even when we are discouraged.
**We believe, that when we are discouraged,
raising our voices for justice will offer us peace!**

Prayers in the Stillness

"Stillness"

Leader:

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

I invite you to a deep breath—
perhaps eyes closed or fixed on a candle—
as we prepare for a time of prayer.

[pause for a breath]

Sung by the choir on recording or a soloist:

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

Prayers of the People

O Holy One,

We come before you an Advent people full of desire and longing
for the One who has been promised.

We come this morning longing for the desert of wilderness

We know in this world and in our lives

To be transformed into pools of water

We come longing for peace in a miraculous time

Of increasing signs and wonders of peace.

We come asking again for your strength and wisdom;

As we make this Advent journey, we confess some of our longing is born of envy.

We envy the obviously bright, obviously compelling star

The Magi and shepherds followed.

Even as we claim outward signs of hope

And gratefully prepare for

Christ's advent,

some of us struggle inwardly with Gethsemanes
of betrayal, loneliness, and brokenness in our relationship
with family, neighbor, and community.

Clothe us in compassion, that we might forgive ourselves

And others as you have forgiven us,
Restoring relationship, repairing that which is broken.
As we pray for the hungry, the ill, the grieving,
we ask for strength to respond to them and their needs
with bread, not stone.
We wait, generous God, we wait anxiously
To cradle the babe, the child of Mary,
O come, Emmanuel, come.
Hear us as we pray together the prayer that this Child of Mary teaches us saying:

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.

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

Announcements and Opportunities to “Fill the Night” with Hope

[whether you are in the sanctuary or online, you will likely not be “passing the plate” in this year of pandemic. Announce ways of giving appropriate to your church and announce ways to offer through action this week, then finish with the Doxology]

December 20 , 2020 Newsletter

Upcoming Events:

December 13 th	10:30 am	Worship
December 14 th	6:30 pm	Advent Study
December 16 th	10 am 6:30 pm	Coffee and Conversation @ church in choir room and via zoom
December 17 th	7 pm	OMG
December 21 st	3 pm to 7 pm 7 pm	Longest Night – Blue Christmas Church open for prayer Blue Christmas Worship
December 19 th	2 pm	Christmas Caroling in the parking Lot

December 24 th	7 pm 7:15 pm	Christmas Eve – Sanctuary open Christmas Story read for the children in Sanctuary Light Candles outside & Sing " Silent Night"
December 27 th	10:30 am	Pre-recorded worship
December 31 January 1 st		New Year's Eve (office closed) New Year's Day (office closed)

New Address:

Mary O'Dell, Magnolia Square, 1502 West Edgewood, Room 1B,
Springfield, MO. Phone: (816) 805-0202

Prayer List:

Jim Spencer

Knese Family: Mike Berger's Daughter' Father-in-Law passed away

Evelyn Edward's niece passed away

Eleanor Berger's cousin, Beverly Griffaw passed away.

Birthdays:

December 21 st	Danny Pace Tim Zay
December 27 th	Mariah Datema
December 28 th	John Allen

Anniversaries:

December 23 rd	Jim May and Dr. Donna Harper
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Thank you to all who donated for the portable PA system.

Thank you to those who donated to Crosslines.

We welcome continued donations to PA system and Crossline.

Call to Give

In this time of social distancing
we ask that you place your tithes and offerings
in the jar in the Narthex.

If you are worshipping with us at home
you can mail your contribution to

St. John's Chapel UCC

4344 S Fremont

Springfield, MO 65804

Or you can go to

stjohnschapel.org and contribute electronically.

At this time of year,
the abundance of some and the needs of so many
stand in marked contrast.
As we bring our tithes and offerings, may Christ's heart rejoice
and the needs of others be tended.

Prayer

Believe, with a peaceful 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

Carol of Peace

"Go Tell It On the Mountain"

154 in New Century

Introduction to the Carol:

Our Carol of Peace this week was created
by people who endured brutal hardships as the result of slavery.

But, though people of African descent
were ripped from much of their cultural heritage,

they maintained their heritage of group song,
punctuated by West African rhythms and vocal stylings.

Of course the safest thing for oppressed peoples to sing about
was the religious beliefs that,

first forced upon them by their oppressors,
later gave many hope in the midst of suffering.

"Go Tell It On The Mountain" is probably

the best-known African American Christmas song.
The words “seeker” and “watchman” are thought to have been code words
for those seeking freedom on the Underground Railroad.
It was made popular by the Fisk Jubilee Singers in the 19th century
as these college students—themselves freed slaves—
traveled the country to raise money and awareness.
They were turned away from hotels, railway waiting rooms,
and even some churches because of their color.
As we sing, let us honor them, honor all who have endured slavery
Let us...
*Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.”*

... indeed that the Prince of Peace that calls us
to break the chains of oppression... is *born!*

Benediction

Pastor: You are invited to pick up this week’s candle and prepare to take it to reside in
the wreath
Hold it high for the Benediction:

Liturgist

We are God’s people
waiting for justice . . .
while we work for change
waiting for restored health . . .
while we pause to heal
waiting for wholeness . . .
while we mend the brokenness
waiting for peace . . .
while we eliminate hatred.

Pastor Sue

And so, my friends, like wild bells ringing out into the clear skies,
Go!
Share the resounding Good News
with which Jesus entered this world
and to which you are called:
To carry the light of the Word that became flesh –
the Light that is Life to all.

Postlude

Worship Notes

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