

Worship for December 24, 2023 4th Sunday of Advent “Love that Transforms Us”
For the transformation of the world, we study God's Word in context to be equipped to live Jesus' Way.

† - Please rise in body or spirit where you see the cross



CENTERING WORDS Glorify God this day. Magnify the Lord with all your heart. Sing praises to God who reigns above. Glorify the Lord with gladness.

SERVICE OF THE ACOLYTE

† CALL TO WORSHIP [*Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, June 2023*]

L: Stop. Listen. Pay attention. Love is coming near.

P: We wait in the love of the coming Messiah that transforms us.

L: The Hope Bringer, Peace Maker, Joy Sustainer grows in a womb, preparing to be born among us.

P: We wait in the love of the coming Messiah that transforms us.

L: With Mary, we long for the coming of the Child who will transform the world, bringing justice where injustice reigns, fullness where hunger persists, and favor to the ones the world calls lowly.

P: We wait in the love of the coming Messiah that transforms us.

L: So let us join our voices and our lives in magnifying God, our Savior!

P: We come to wait and to declare the coming of the Love that transforms us! Amen.

† OPENING PRAYER

Holy God of Joy, We rejoice in the reality of who you are. We live within the joy of your love for us. Our contentment comes and goes. Our happiness ebbs and flows. Our feelings depend upon our circumstances, our physical health, our brain chemistry. But our joy is deeply rooted in our identity as your beloved children. And we give you thanks. AMEN

† OPENING HYMN It Came upon the Midnight Clear UMH #218

† BLESSING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS – DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise him all creatures here below. Praise him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

JOYS AND CONCERNS - (The Lord's Prayer “trespass”)

PASS THE PEACE OF CHRIST WITH ONE ANOTHER

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE OF LOVE

L: When the angel Gabriel visited Mary, announcing God’s plan for her to conceive and give birth to the Messiah, “Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’” (Luke 1:34) And yet, only a few months later, Mary sings to Elizabeth, My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. We, like Mary, hear God’s call to be part of making God’s dream for our salvation and flourishing a reality, and we question, “How can this be? I am only...” Yet, like Mary, the “onlys” that make us hesitate are gifts God can and will use as God’s love transforms us into bearers of good news.

P: We wait as people who have encountered divine Love that disrupts the status quo and ushers us into abundant life marked by mutual love and peace that flows from the flourishing of all people.

L: We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, our just peace, our fierce joy, and the love that transforms us. May Love grow within us, transforming us into bold witnesses of God’s salvation with our voices and our lives. Amen.

P: Amen. *[Light all four outer candles of the Advent wreath.]*

HYMN OF PREPARATION Emmanuel, Emmanuel UMH #204

SELECTED SCRIPTURE 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 // Romans 16:25-27 // Luke 1:26-38

MESSAGE Love that Transforms Us

† CLOSING HYMN Love Came Down at Christmas UMH #242

† COMMISSION & BLESSING

† CHORAL BENEDICTION O Come, O Come, Emmanuel UMH #211 Verse 4 only

O come, O Branch of Jesse's stem, unto your own and rescue them!

From depths of hell your people save, and give them victory o'er the grave.

Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

PENNS VALLEY CHARGE ANNOUNCEMENTS – Full calendar on PennsValleyParish.info

Candlelight Christmas Eve Services with Communion 3pm at Sprucetown and 6pm at St. James in Coburn

December 31 – We will follow our regular worship schedule.

January 3 – 1st Wednesday Bible Study 10-11:30am at Sprucetown UMC. All are welcome!

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CCLI #1671542 Elements of worship are from Ministry Matters, UMC’s Discipleship Ministries, A Preacher’s Guide Lectionary Sermon Series Thematic Plans for Years A B and C, Feasting on the Word, The United Methodist Book of Worship, and The Abingdon Worship Annual 2023.