



Seventh & James Baptist Church
December 17, 2023 · 11:00 a.m.
The Third Sunday of Advent

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Chiming of the Hour

Meditation

“Joy to the World”

arr. David Angerman

CHILDREN’S HANDBELL CHOIR

Welcome and Call to Worship

Erin Conaway

One: Beloved child of God, you are welcome here....

Many: We give thanks to God for bringing us into this moment of worship.

One: For no matter who you are or where you’ve been, you matter to God and to us.

Many: Our hearts rejoice and give thanks for all those who have come before us and made a place for us to worship, pray, sing, wonder, doubt, believe, and just be.

One: May the love of God through Christ our Lord convince you of your worth and invitation into this body of believers as we worship together in thanksgiving and hope.

Choral Summons

“How Great Our Joy”

Traditional German Carol

While by the sheep we watched at night, glad tidings brought an angel bright.

How great our joy! Great our joy! Joy, joy, joy! Joy, joy, joy!

Praise we the Lord in heaven on high! Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!

Processional Hymn, No. 125

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

Litany of Joy

Leslie Rosencrans

One: Joy to the world! The Lord is come and is coming. On this Sunday when we light the candle of joy, we take a moment to breathe in the joy all around us.

Many: Counting our blessings of family and friends, we give you thanks, O God.

One: For the way our hearts are warmed as we hear the voices of our children praising you in song, for the way we gasp for breath when we see the motley wonder of the trees

in their colorful splendor, and for the way our noses delight as we take in the mints and cinnamon and chocolates of the season, O God, we give you thanks.

Many: Guide our hearts to the beauty all around and within as we wait for your return.

One: Joy to the earth! The Lord is come and is coming. Turn our hearts toward the preservation and restoration of creation as we learn to better care for our air, our water, our land, and our resources.

All: Open our eyes to the joy in our lives and help us to celebrate together the way you are working and moving in our hearts and through our hands.

Prayer of Joy

Leslie Rosencrans

Lighting the Candle of Joy

Tammie Hartgroves
Taylynn Cross
Audrey Ludwig

Touching a flame to the wick of joy, we bring all of our celebrations and the Ebenezers of glad moments into this sacred space. Birthday candles, anniversary candles, wedding cake toppers and romantic dinners inform the light of this morning. We remember with grief those moments that cannot repeat and light the candle of joy to honor that pain and celebrate the wonder of shared life. This light holds them all in mesmerizing flickers of healing as the distance between sorrow and joy shrinks to the width of the flame. We give thanks not for the absence of pain, but for the fullness of real joy large enough to hold it all.

— *Sacred Seasons Advent/Christmastide 2023*,
a publication from Seeds of Hope Publishers

Choral Response

“When God Is a Child”

Hope is a star that shines in the night, leading us on till the morning is bright.
Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth, giving a promise of safety and worth.
Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn, telling the world that the Savior is born.
When God is a child there’s joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, and none shall be afraid.

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Tammie Hartgroves

Epistle Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Sean Sutcliffe

Meditation

“Away in a Manger”

arr. Hal H. Hopson

CHORISTERS and YOUTH CHOIR

Carolien Tantra, *piano*

Hymn, No. 139

“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”

Choristers Hymn-of-the-Month for November

Gospel Reading

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Scott Turner

One: This is the Word of the Lord.

Many: Thanks be to God.

Prayers of God’s People

Scott Turner

Offertory

“Good King Wenceslas”

arr. Anna Laura Page

YOUTH HANDBELL CHOIR

During the offertory, we invite you to prayerfully consider your stewardship of all the resources God is entrusting to you. The work of God at Seventh & James is dependent on the financial generosity and volunteer service of its members and friends. Offering plates are available at the doors of the sanctuary as you leave worship. Join us as you respond to God’s call.

Doxology

(Sung to Veni Emmanuel, tune of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”)

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Praise God, above ye heavenly host.

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Children’s Sermon

Leslie Rosencrans

*All children are invited to come forward for the Children’s Sermon.
Preschoolers [ages 4-kindergarten] may then go to Extended Session.*

Anthem

“Come, Messiah, Come”

Lynn Shaw Bailey
Becki Slagle Mayo

YOUTH CHOIR

Charlotte Daniel, *flute*

Carolien Tantra, *piano*

Sermon

“Wilderness Witness”

Erin Conaway

(John 1:6-8, 19-28)

Silent Reflection

Then a woman said, Speak to us of Joy and Sorrow.

And he answered:

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.

And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.

And how else can it be?

The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.

Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?

And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives?

When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.

When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are keeping for that which has been your delight.

Some of you say, “Joy is greater than sorrow,” and others say, “Nay, sorrow is the greater.”

But I say unto you, they are inseparable.

Together they come, and when one sits alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed.

— Kahlil Gibran, “On Joy and Sorrow”

Hymn of Commitment, No. 90

“People, Look East”

*If you would like to make a public profession of your faith in Christ
or request membership in this congregation, our ministers
will greet you at the front of the sanctuary.*

Congregational Response

In response to your decision, we pledge ourselves to be the family of God for you in this place; we offer you our love, our care, our kinship, and our hopes; we hope to learn from you, give to you, and receive from you, by God’s grace. Amen.

Pastoral Blessing

Erin Conaway

Choral Benediction

“Advent Prayer”

Mark Patterson

CHORISTERS

Jim Williams, *piano*

Postlude

“In Dulci Jubilo”

J. S. Bach

Today at Seventh

Children's Handbell Choir

Dillan Damping
Ava Farris
Eri Hatakeyama
Robin Land

Audrey Ludwig
Ezriela Martinez
Avery Poehls
Chloe Smith

Edward Smith
Wesley Zuniga

Choristers

Dillan Damping
Ava Farris
Sefton Farris
Eri Hatakeyama
Jun Hatakeyama

Robin Land
Audrey Ludwig
Ezriela Martinez
Keziah Martinez
Comfort Michael

Avery Poehls
Julianna Rios
Chloe Smith
Edward Smith
Wesley Zuniga

Youth Choir

Sam Conaway
Yuri Hatakeyama
Ivy Hynan

CJ McKeever
Mathis McKeever
Atticus Ryden

Eli Ryden

Youth Handbell Choir

Sam Conaway
Yuri Hatakeyama
Ivy Hynan

CJ McKeever
Mathis McKeever
Atticus Ryden

Eli Ryden

Our Pianist today is Jim Williams.

The Artwork on the Cover is by Sally Lynn Askins.

The Rose on the Organ celebrates the birth of Iris Lynne Crouch-Dodson, born December 12. Parents are Kelsey and Taylor Crouch-Dodson. Grandparents are Sherrie and Derek Dodson.

The Sanctuary Flowers are given in celebration of Robbie & Daryle Echols' 47th wedding anniversary and Robbie's Birthday.