



Seventh & James Baptist Church
December 24, 2023 · 11:00 a.m.
The Fourth Sunday of Advent

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Chiming of the Hour

Meditation

“Joy Medley”

arr. Heather Sorenson

Lydia Bratcher and Daniel Farris, *piano*

Welcome and Call to Worship

Scott Turner

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

“Love Came Down at Christmas”

Robert H. Young

Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, love divine;
Love was born at Christmas, Star and Angels gave the sign.
Love came down at Christmas.

Processional Hymn, No. 127

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

Litany of Love

Erin Conaway

One: The writer of 1 John encourages us to love one another because you, O God, are love. Love is such a difficult word for us to define. For many of us it has been manipulated and used against us to get something from us. For many of us it has meant only pain and critique, never joy and affirmation. For some of us, our love causes us to be ostracized and pushed out.

Many: God, show us true love, remind us of what your love looks like.

One: We are reminded that our love for one another grows from the deep well of your love for us—even before we loved you, O God, you loved us. So often the very thing that breaks our sense of your absence in our midst is the love of a neighbor, a sister or brother.

Many: Give us the courage to love as you love, before and without guarantee of reciprocation.

One: We are so often a people who cry out in our thirst and find you meeting us with living water and we drink deeply and with intensity. Then we wipe our mouths on our sleeves, stand up and walk away and instantly forget our thirst as we encounter the next thirsty brother or sister along the path.

All: Teach us to live in love, as your beloved. Teach us to live in love: working, moving, feeding, clothing, visiting, and sacrificing. Teach us to live in love: the way you love us.

Prayer of Love

Erin Conaway

Lighting the Candle of Love

Rachel and Daniel Farris
Ava Farris, Sefton Farris

Perfect love casts out fear. Like shadows disappearing as the match flashes hot and bright, our fears race away when we get in touch with the depth of God’s love. We light the candle of love this morning and gaze into the beauty of hearts combining. Children playing together above anything that would separate them; a kiss on the top of your head conveying the blessing; the friend who knows your crushed dreams and your wild success and loves you anyway; the grace of being needed; we know love through so many different expressions and gestures. May the light of love illumine our words, ignite our smiles, blaze in our laughter, and rage in our commitment to be siblings to one another.

— *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.
Love is a flame that burns in our heart. Jesus has come and will never depart.

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 *2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16* Carolyn Casey

Epistle Reading *Romans 16:25-27* Ann McGlashan

Hymn, No. 147 “Love Came Down at Christmas”

Gospel Reading *Luke 1:46b-55* Matt Rosencrans

One: This is the Word of the Lord.
Many: Thanks be to God.

Prayers of God's People Matt Rosencrans

Offertory “O Holy Night” Adolphe Adam
arr. Herbert Colvin

Daniel Farris, *piano*
Lydia Bratcher, *organ*

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.*

Responsive Reading of Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

Scott Turner

One: I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

Many: I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

One: You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David:

Many: 'I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations.'"

One: Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said: "I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people.

Many: I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him;

One: My hand shall always remain with him; my arm also shall strengthen him.

Many: The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him.

One: I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.

Many: My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name his horn shall be exalted.

One: I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers.

All: He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!'"

Anthem

"An Advent Credo"

Joseph Martin

Pam Hyatt, *flute*

I believe in joy. I believe in the promise of morning.

I believe that Christ will come and wipe our tears away.

I believe in hope. I believe in life everlasting.

I believe that Christ will come and bring a bright new day. Lord, in my heart, I believe.

When the darkness falls around me, in the still of the night,

When shadows all surround me, faith will lead me to the morning light!

I believe in peace. I believe in a song of tomorrow.

I believe that Christ will come and war shall be no more.

I believe in love. I believe in the grace that unites us.

I believe that Christ will come in glory from above.
I believe in joy. I believe in hope. I believe in peace, I believe in love.

Sermon

“Born Again...and Again...and Again...”

Erin Conaway

(Luke 1:46b-55)

Silent Reflection

I treasure the story because it forces me to ask: When the mystery of God’s love breaks through into my consciousness, do I run from it? Do I ask of it what it cannot answer? Shrugging, do I retreat into facile clichés, the popular but false wisdom of what ‘we all know’? Or am I virgin enough to respond from my deepest, truest self, and say something new, a ‘yes’ that will change me forever?

— Kathleen Norris, *Amazing Grace*

Hymn of Commitment, No. 132

“It Came upon the Midnight Clear”

*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

“There Is No Rose”

Robert H. Young

Leave we all this worldly mirth and follow we this joyful birth
Transeamus. (Let us follow)

Postlude

“Joy to the World”

(ANTIOCH)
Joyce Jones

Today at Seventh

Our Pianist today is Tommy Edds.

The Artwork on the Cover is by Sally Lynn Askins.

The Sanctuary Flowers are given in honor of Sharon McNeil's birthday on December 23.

Hearing devices are available at the sound booth for any who need assistance.

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