



**Seventh & James Baptist Church
December 22, 2024 · 11:00 a.m.
The Fourth Sunday of Advent**

Seventh & James Baptist Church
December 22, 2024 · 11:00 a.m.
The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Chiming of the Hour

Meditation

“Of the Father’s Love Begotten”

(DIVINUM MYSTERIUM)
Wilbur Held

Lighting the Candle of Love

David Gilbreath and Tony Henson

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*,
Seeds of Hope Publishers, Advent/Christmastide 2023

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

“Noel, Noel, Sing Noel”

Timothy R. McKinney

Noel, noel, sing noel, for Christ today is born.
Angels gladsome tidings bring, loud let your praises ring:
Hosanna in excelsis! Hosanna in excelsis!
For Christ the Savior of the world has come!

Processional Hymn, No. 127

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

Litany of Emmanuel

Joshua Stewart

One: O come, O come, and be our God-with-us,
O long-sought with-ness for a world without,
O secret seed, O hidden spring of light.

**Many: Come to us Wisdom, come unspoken Name,
Come Root, and Key, and King, and Holy Flame,**

One: O quickened little wick so tightly curled,
Be folded with us into time and place,

**Many: Unfold for us the mystery of grace
And make a womb of all this wounded world.**

One: O heart of heaven beating in the earth,
O tiny hope within our hopelessness,

**All: Come to be born, to bear us to our birth,
To touch a dying world with new-made hands
And make these rags of time our swaddling bands.**

— adapted from “O Emmanuel” by Malcolm Guite,
Sounding the Seasons: Seventy Sonnets for the Christian Year, p. 13

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Joshua Stewart

Old Testament Reading*Micah 5:2-5a*

Jun Hatakeyama

Epistle Reading*Hebrews 10:5-10*

Eri Hatakeyama

Hymn, No. 147

“Love Came Down at Christmas”

Gospel Reading*Luke 1:39-55*

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 ColvinDaniel 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 80:1-7**

Daniel Farris

One: Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us!

Many: Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

One: O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

Many: You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure.

One: You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves.

All: Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Anthem

“Incarnate Love”

Robert H. Young

Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love Divine;
Love was born at Christmas, Star and Angels gave the sign.
Worship we the Godhead, Love incarnate, Love Divine;
Worship we our Jesus: but wherewith for sacred sign?
Love shall be our token, Love be yours and Love be mine,
Love to God and all men, Love for plea and gift and sign.
Love came down at Christmas.

Sermon

“It’s Complicated…”
(Luke 1:39-55)

Erin Conaway

Silent Reflection

I know you have your tears too. Maybe we could hold our tears together, and together peer out into the dark hours, and watch for that in-breaking light. Because the belligerent truth is I believe in that Light far more than I believe in the gloom. You remember how Isaiah’s final word isn’t about the gloomy cloud or death’s dark shadow. Isaiah settles on the promise which always stirs the bones: “Arise, shine, for your light has come...over you the Lord will rise.”

Buechner’s Godric needs the final word: “What’s lost is nothing to what’s found, and all the death that ever was, set next to life, would scarcely fill a cup.”

Advent on, my friend. Advent on.

— Winn Collier, “An Advent Letter,”
<https://substack.com/@winncollier>

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 “Awake! Awake and Greet the New Morn”

Awake! Awake and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning.
Sing out your joy, for soon he is born, behold! the Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together,
He opens wide the heavenly door, and lives now inside us forever.

Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night, though dark the winter and cheerless,
The rising sun shall crown you with light, be strong and loving and fearless;
Love be our song and love our prayer, and love, our endless story,
May God fill every day we share, and bring us at last into glory.

Postlude

“The First Nowell”

arr. Anna Laura Page

Today at Seventh

Our Pianist today is Tommy Edds.

The Sanctuary Flowers are given in honor of Jane Newsom in celebration of her birthday on December 27.

The Artwork on the Cover is by Sally Lynn Askins.

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

Permission to print music obtained from CCLI, license #1450684. Permission to record and stream worship services from CCLI, license #22321029.