



# Grace First

## PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*Together – Worshipping, Witnessing, Working*



The Reverend Ashley Drake Mertz, Pastor  
The Reverend David A. Slyter, Associate Pastor  
Marialice Parish, M.M., Organist and Director of Music

# **THE ORDER OF WORSHIP**

December 13, 2020

The Third Sunday of Advent

## **Welcome and Announcements**

In the ancient world, various peoples lit fires to mark the turning of the light into winter's season and to pray for the return of the light. The church has Christianized that practice in the lighting of the Advent wreath. To us, these candles are signs of the growing light of Christ who is coming again in all fullness into the darkness of our world. Until the dawning of that Great Day, we watch and wait in Holy Spirit for Christ's coming into the darkness of our world, lighting candles of hope, peace, joy, and love; and remembering the promises of God with prayer.

## **Prelude**

"Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"

"Away in A Manger"

"Gentle Mary Laid Her Child"

Handbell Quartet

Linda Crownover, Nancy Deison, Sue Jones, & Linda Young

## **Call to Worship**

Once upon a time, there was a little girl who had a terrible day. She left her lunch at home. She skinned her knee on the playground, and no one wanted to sit with her on the bus. As she sank into her mother's arms at the end of the day, her mother said, "honey, what was the best part of today?" The little girl cried and said, "Nothing! The entire day was terrible." So the mother got down on one knee, wiped away her tears and said, "there is always some good."

Sometimes we just really have to look for it.” The little girl looked up at her mom and said, “what is good about today?” And the mother said, “for starters, you’re here in my arms.” Friends, anytime we gather together to worship God, we are here in God’s arms. So may we recognize that gift, and in doing so, may we sow joy. Let us worship Holy God.

### **Lighting of the Advent Wreath**

On week 1 of Advent we lit the candle of hope, being reminded that those who keep awake, those who dream, are people who hope. (Light the candle of hope)

On week 2 we light the candle of peace, the candle that reminds us that as people who dream, those who prepare the way, there is a way that does not include fear, conflict, pain, but instead is a way of peace. (Light the candle of peace)

Today we light the candle of joy as a reminder that God’s dream for this world involves the end of all tears. God’s dream for this world involves a joy that overflows and is contagious. (light candle of joy)

So may this fire burn bright, and as it does, may we sing. May we dance. May we laugh. May we hold onto the people we love.

May we sow joy in a hurting world, and may it be an act of holy resistance. Amen.

# Hymn 401

## 401 Here in This Place

### Gather Us In



1 Here in this place the new light is stream-ing;  
 2 We are the young, our lives are a mys-tery.  
 3 Here we will take the wine and the wa-ter;  
 4 Not in the dark of build-ings con-fin-ing,



now is the dark-ness van-ished a-way;  
 We are the old who yearn for your face.  
 here we will take the bread of new birth.  
 not in some heav-en, light veers a-way:



see in this space our fears and our dream-ings  
 We have been sung through-out all of his-tory,  
 Here you shall call your sons and your daugh-ters,  
 here in this place the new light is shin-ing;



brought here to you in the light of this day.  
 called to be light to the whole hu-man race.  
 call us a-new to be salt for the earth.  
 now is the king-dom, and now is the day.



Gath-er us in, the lost and for-sak-en;  
 Gath-er us in, the rich and the haugh-ty;  
 Give us to drink the wine of com-pas-sion;  
 Gath-er us in and hold us for-ev-er;

The "you/your" mentioned in every stanza is never identified, but this 1979 hymn is clearly a corporate prayer to God on behalf of the diverse congregation who have assembled for worship, longing to be transformed and used as God's witnesses and for God's purposes.

**Call to Confession**

Let us confess before God and one another the places where we fall short of who God has created us to be. Let us pray together the prayer of confession printed in your bulletin, followed by your own silent prayer.

**Prayer of Confession (Unison)**

**Holy, Magnificent, Majestic Creator: with a sky full of stars and a world full of flowers, there should be no end to my joy. And yet, instead of decorating my very being with joy, I let it slip away like loose change. Instead of singing like Mary, or dancing like David, I pass by remarkable beauty and love most days, unfazed. Forgive me. Teach me the ways of children, who laugh and dance and sing as if joy is the very thing that keeps them alive. Maybe they have joy figured out.**

**Silent Confession**

**Assurance of Pardon**

In Jesus Christ, God has done great things for us! Even if we have gone out in tears, God brings us home shouting for joy. Thanks be to God: we are forgiven!

## **Prayer of Illumination**

Great Creator,

We are in awe of you. We will never know how you managed to dream up Mountains and valleys, Freckles, dimples, and curly hair, a cool morning mist, the change of seasons, or the magic of music. Your greatness is beyond our reckoning. And because we are in awe of you, we believe we must follow Mary's lead and allow our souls to sing. We believe that the appropriate reaction to your goodness is complete gratitude, which looks like love for our neighbor, justice for the poor, food for the hungry, and joy that overflows. And even though we do not always believe in ourselves, we believe that our song is pleasing to you. We believe. Help our unbelief. In Christ's name we pray, amen.

## **First Reading**

**Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11**

The word of God for the people of God

**Thanks be to God**

## **Music Ministry**

Arthur B. Jennings

"Springs in the Desert"

Sanctuary Choir 2004

Emily Forester, Soprano

## **Second Reading**

**Luke 1:46-55**

The word of God for the people of God

**Thanks be to God**

## **Sermon**

**The Rev. Ashley Drake Mertz**

## Hymn 100

# 100 My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout

### Canticle of the Turning



1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the  
 2 Though I am small, my God, my all, you  
 3 From the halls of power to the for - tress tower, not a  
 4 Though the na - tions rage from age to age, we re -



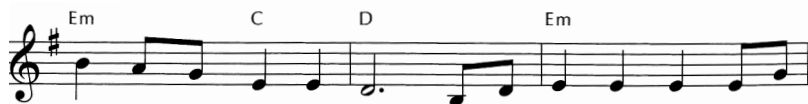
God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the  
 work great things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the  
 stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your  
 mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -



won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait.  
 depths of the past to the end of the age to be.  
 jus - tice tears ev - ery ty - rant from his throne.  
 liv - er us from the con - quer-or's crush - ing grasp.



You fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my  
 Your ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to  
 The hun - gry poor shall weep no more, for the  
 This sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the



weak-ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my  
 those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the  
 food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread; ev - ery  
 prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be

By employing an energetic Irish folk song for its melody, this ballad-like paraphrase of the *Magnificat*, Mary's song at her meeting with her relative Elizabeth (Luke 1:46-55), recaptures both the wonder and the faith of the young woman who first recognized what God was doing.

TEXT: Rory Cooney, 1990  
 MUSIC: Irish melody; arr. Rory Cooney, 1990  
 Text and Music Arr. © 1990 GIA Publications, Inc.

STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN  
 Irregular

## **Affirmation of Faith (Responsive)**

We believe in God.

**We believe that God has dreams for humanity.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit.

**We believe that the Holy Spirit comforts us when our dreams turn to nightmares.**

We believe in Jesus.

**We believe that Jesus walked this world to wake us up, inviting us to be the church in the world.**

We believe in dreams.

**We believe in the power that dreams have to show us a new way.**

So, in this Advent season,

**We are those who dream and those who wake up. Let it be so. Amen.**

## **Prayers for the People and The Lord's Prayer**

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.

## **Call to Stewardship**

As we offer to God our time, talent, and treasure we pray that each offering will sow joy in this world.

## **Offertory**

*Aberystwyth*

"Watchman, Tell Us of the Night"



## Congregational Response Hymn 606 Old Hundredth

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.

## Offertory Prayer

Gracious God, teach us to give thanks in all circumstances, for you are always with us. Thank you for the privilege of sharing what we have with others, of giving ourselves away in love, and of receiving the gifts that others share with us. With our whole being, spirit and soul and body, we rejoice in you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Hymn 99

### 99 My Soul Gives Glory to My God

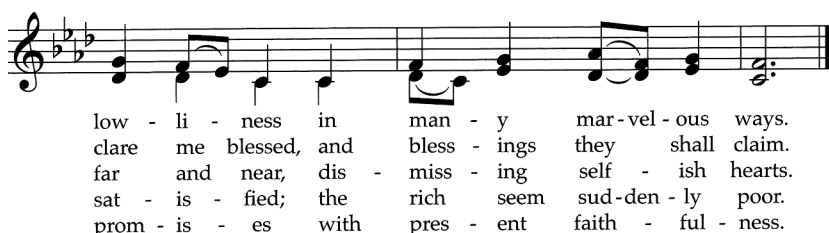
Song of Mary



1 My soul gives glo - ry to my God; my  
2 My God has done great things for me: yes,  
3 From age to age to all who fear, such  
4 Love casts the might - y from their thrones, pro -  
5 Praise God, whose lov - ing cov - e - nant sup -



heart pours out its praise. God lift - ed up my  
ho - ly is God's name. All peo - ple will de -  
mer - cy love im - parts, dis - pens - ing jus - tice  
motes the in - se - cure, leaves hun - gry spir - its  
ports those in dis - tress, re - mem - ber - ing past



This 20th-century paraphrase is based on the Song of Mary (Luke 1:46–55), commonly known by its opening Latin word, *Magnificat*. This song of praise offers clear reminders that God’s purposes often lead to the reversal of human values, exalting the poor and dethroning the mighty.

TEXT: Miriam Therese Winter, 1979; rev. 1987

MUSIC: Wyeth’s *Repository of Sacred Music*, 1813; harm. C. Winfred Douglas, 1940

Text © 1978, 1987 Medical Mission Sisters

Music Harm. © 1943, 1961, 1985 Church Pension Fund

MORNING SONG

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## Benediction

## The Peace of Christ

The peace of Christ be with you  
 And also with you

## Postlude

J.S. Bach

“From Heaven on High”

Liturgy taken from Sanctified Art Those Who Dream: for Advent – Epiphany  
 Year B, Adapted from a prayer by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC |  
 sanctifiedart.org and Feasting on the Word: Worship Companion,  
 Year B, Volume 1.