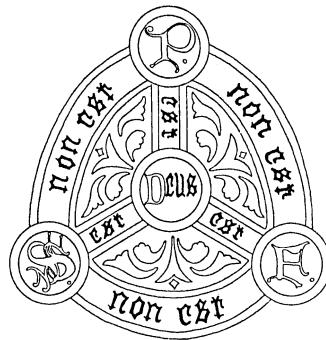


Fourth Sunday in Advent

December 20, 2020



COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
A Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America
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*Upon entering the sanctuary, please be sensitive
to the congregation's preparation for worship, and please make sure
all electronic devices are turned off or set to silent mode.*

-DRAWING NEAR TO GOD-

Welcome and Silent Prayer

You surprised a world, O God, by coming not in clashing thunder or flashing lights but in the quiet and simple splendor of a child's radiant face. Help us to understand this mystery of love beyond all loves, that we may be led to a new kind of love: a love that loves not by what we can get but in what we can give, a love that counts not who is worthy to receive but is showered freely on all. Show us the way of Bethlehem's child, that in seeing, we may believe, and in believing, we may learn again how to love. Amen.

***Call to Worship**

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
 who were too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
 one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
 from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time
 when she who is in labor has given birth;
then the rest of his brothers shall return
 to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,
 in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
 to the ends of the earth.

And he shall be their peace.

—Micah 5.2-5a

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you; you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

—Luke 2:8-15

***Prayer of Adoration**

***Song of Advent**

Hymn No. 218

ANGELS, FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY

-HAVING OUR HEARTS CLEANSED-

Confession of Sin

Heavenly Father, we long to recapture the wonder of Christmas. You showed the world your splendor in the coming of your Son, yet our sins often leave us cold. Instead of peaceful, our hearts are often anxious; instead of joyful, irritable; instead of filled with surprise, bland; instead of anticipatory, fearful. In our sophistication we have become impoverished. Have mercy on us, O God. Renew us by your grace and mercy. Deliver us from the things that dim the brightness of your grace within us and prevent us from taking our deepest delight in you. We ask this in the name of Jesus, God with us. Amen.

Silently add your own confession of sin.

Assurance of Pardon

1 Timothy 1.15-16

Confession of Faith

Of what advantage to us is Christ's ascension?

Christ physically ascended on our behalf, just as he came down to earth physically on our account, and he is now advocating for us in the presence of his Father, preparing a place for us, and also sends us his Spirit.¹

—The New City Catechism, No. 51

Prayer for the Church and the World

¹ "Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us" (Rom 8.34).

-ATTENDING TO THE WORD-

Sermon

"The Message of the Virgin Birth"

Matthew 1.18-25

Rev. Ron Gonzales

Worship of God with Tithes and Offerings

***DOXOLOGY**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Words Thomas Ken, 1709; music Genevan Psalter, 1551; Public Domain

-OBSERVING THE SACRAMENT-

The Lord's Supper

All who are baptized Christians, living under the authority of Christ and his body, the church, are warmly invited to partake of the Supper. Simply tell the elder or deacon who passes before you whether you prefer wine or grape juice. We will wait and partake together after everyone has been served. By eating the bread and drinking the cup, you are acknowledging that you are a sinner, without hope except in the sovereign mercy of God, and that you are trusting in Christ alone for salvation. If this does not describe you, we are glad you are here but commend to you instead the following prayer for your use during this time.

A Prayer for those Searching for the Truth

Jesus, you claim to be the way, the truth, and the life. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reasons for doing so. Guide me, teach me, and open to me the reality of who you are. Give me an understanding of you that is coherent, convincing, and leads to the life you promise. Amen.

***Song of Advent**

Hymn No. 195

JOY TO THE WORLD! THE LORD IS COME

-GOING FORTH TO SERVE-

***Benediction**

Numbers 6.24-26

*Please stand if able.

Gatherings

Home Fellowship Group is temporarily on hold. We hope to resume it just as soon as possible.

A Men's Leadership Bible Study, led by Kirk Alden, meets at Tate's Umapine Mercantile on Thursdays, from 6:30 to 7:30 PM. All men are invited. For more information, talk to Kirk.

Prayer Meeting: We meet the second Tuesday of each month, at 5:15 PM in the sanctuary, to pray for one another, for the kingdom, and for the world. Please join us.

Sermon Notes: “The Message of the Virgin Birth” (Matthew 1.18-25)

Prayer Concerns

Pandemic: Continue to pray for the healing of those suffering from the virus, and pray that the vaccine proves effective in protecting our healthcare workers and the most vulnerable.

The Persecuted Church: There are 70,000 Christians out of nearly 6 million people in *Turkmenistan*, which was formerly part of the Soviet Union. Today it is ruled by its president, who tightly controls every aspect of daily life, including religious worship. While most citizens are Muslim, their allegiance is cultural rather than religiously devout. Christian gatherings are monitored, Christian literature is illegal, and unregistered churches risk constant raid and imprisonment for congregants and church leaders. Pray that God turns the hearts of Turkmenistan's leaders to himself. Pray for believers who were formerly Muslim, that their faith proves genuine and grows strong despite the pressures they face. And pray for the churches being monitored by the government, that they would be safe and able to gather for worship.

A Shield and Buckler: The psalmist assures us, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of Almighty . . . For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler" (Ps 91.1, 3-4). In addition to healing and strength, pray that *Eric Carpenter, Sandy Cupolillo, Roberta Haer, Judie Jud, Del Klicker, Tom Manning, Gunnar McBean, Elizabeth Miller, and Vickie Myers* might take shelter this week under God's mighty care.

Alister & Sarah Torrens (Ukraine): Pray for the Torrens as they give themselves to planting a new church in Kiev, for Alister's teaching responsibilities at the seminary, and that God blesses their labors as they reach out to unbelievers around them.

Announcements

The Christmas Caroling & Wagon Ride has been cancelled, as the wagon is unavailable tonight. Lord willing, we will do it again next year.

Christmas Eve Service: We *will* gather on Christmas Eve! Please come and bring your family and friends to a Service of Lessons and (a few) Carols, at 6:00 PM.

Updated Directories: The new church directories are available on the table just inside the front door. Please help yourself.

Visitors: Welcome to Covenant! We are glad you are here and are eager to get acquainted.

Explanation of the Cover Symbol

The Shield of the Holy Trinity is frequently found in stained glass windows of medieval churches. This emblem expresses the Christian doctrine of the triunity of Almighty God, a truth taught in Scripture and affirmed by the Council of Constantinople in AD 381.