



Joy

*Shout and sing for joy,
city of Zion,
because the holy one
of Israel
is great
among you.*

—ISAIAH 12:6

Welcome to Our Celebration of Worship

To all who live joyfully and long to share their excitement ... to all who mourn and need comfort ... to all who are weary and need rest ... to all who are homeless and desire sheltering love ... to all who pray or are in need of prayer ... to all who sin and need a Savior ... to all who recognize Christ in their midst and hunger to share God's love with all the world ... Old First Presbyterian Church opens wide its doors and in the name of Jesus Christ, says ... WELCOME!

**Those who are able, please stand in body or spirit.*

*(The congregation is invited to join in speaking or singing **items in bold.**)*

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY BEFORE GOD

PRELUDE

Improvisation

K. Friese

*Let us join together in preparing our hearts
for worship as we receive God's gift of joy.*

GREETINGS IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH AND UNISON OPENING PRAYER

Gillian and Zoe Plastaras

Gracious God, we joyfully praise you for fulfilling your promise of a Savior and for what that means in our lives. We thank you for the pure joy of the gift of salvation, freely given through the birth of your Son, Jesus. Create us anew as we wait upon his coming and open our hearts to your Spirit at work among us. Help us to focus on things that are eternal, so that we may know the joy of a life lived for you. We pray in the name of Christ, the Lord, our eternal source of everlasting joy, amen.

INTROIT

Comfort Ye My People (Messiah)

G.F. Handel

CALL TO WORSHIP

Rejoice in the coming of God the Savior, for there is good news on the way!

Good news for the down-trodden, weary, and broken-hearted?

Watch ... wait ... prepare! The good news of the
hope and peace of God is on the way!

Good news for the captive, imprisoned, suffering, and lonely?

Watch ... wait ... prepare! The good news of the
joy and love of God is on the way!

**A thunder in the desert tells of God's coming ...
good news is indeed on the way!**

Let us add our voices to the sound of those crying out
for the joy of Christ, our Lord.

This season and every season; this day and every day; let us sing out for joy!

Rejoicing for this season of listening and preparing,
let us worship our God together.

*HYMN 107

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious God, we are told this is a joyful season, but far too often, our hearts and lives feel joyless. We hear your call to rejoice, but we struggle to respond. Lost in the pressing demands of each day, we lose sight of your joyful presence. Distracted by burdens and concerns that weigh upon our hearts, we fail to notice the simple joys when your grace is made known to us. We pray reluctantly, worship half-heartedly, and serve begrudgingly. True joy escapes us as we replace our anticipation of your joy in Jesus Christ with the fleeting pleasures offered by the world.

Loving God, gather us together in your gracious mercy, forgive us through your unconditional love, and restore in us your everlasting joy. Ignite a new spirit within us, that we may re-discover the unspeakable joy for which we are created. May the coming presence of our Christ fill our hearts with the joy of this season of waiting and inspire us to share our joy with one another. We pray in the name of our everlasting joy ... Emmanuel, God with us, in Jesus, our Christ ...

(Please continue in silent prayer of confession.)

Together, let all of God's people say ... **amen.**

HYMN 551 (Kyrie Eleison)

Lord, Have Mercy

***Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy upon us.***

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Leader: God acts with justice and mercy.

In everlasting love, God redeems us and sets us free.

People: God forgives us ... frees us ... and give us peace.

To God we are ever thankful. Amen.

*RESPONSE OF PRAISE (*Sung Twice*)

There's A Song

**There's a song of joy in my heart; joy is a gift from Jesus. There's a song
of joy in my heart; joy is a gift from God. Al-le-lu-ia! Joy in my
heart is singing praises. Al-le-lu-ia! Joy is a gift from God.**

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

The peace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, be with you all.

And also with you.

Let us greet one another with signs of Christ's peace.

We Listen for God's Word

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 35:1-10, Old Testament p. 663 / P. 811

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM

Like A Child
Sanctuary Choir

P. Houlihan

WE SHARE THE MIRACULOUS JOY OF THE GIFT OF GOD'S OWN SON

*Some say that the Christmas story is the greatest story ever told and
while it does not change much in its telling and re-telling, each and
every opportunity to experience the tremendous love of God, made known
to us in the infant cries of God's Son, our Christ, provides a renewed
chance for us to discover the great hope, peace, joy, and love of God.*

As we share today's telling of the Christmas story through the gifts, skills, and talents of our young disciples, may each one of us receive the unconditional love of God with hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits prepared to hear this good news of great joy, allow God's joy to fill our hearts, and go out sharing God's joy with a world in great need.

We rejoice for the leadership of our young disciples and say a special thank you to their families for choosing Old First to share in their spiritual nurture and a very special thank you to Kerry Degnan, Katie Dopico, and Bob and Pat Miller for offering their time, talent, and dedication to teaching our young disciples and for leading them in today's pageant.

*HYMN 100

My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout

We Respond in Word and Deed

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

(A Brief Statement of Faith – Presbyterian Church U.S.A.)

We trust in God the Holy Spirit, everywhere the giver and renewer of life. The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith, sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor, and binds us together with all believers in the one body of Christ, the Church.

The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture, engages us through the Word proclaimed, claims us in the waters of baptism, feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation, and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.

In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth, praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

INVITATION TO RECEIVE OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

RECEIVING OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY

Of the Father's Love Begotten
Sanctuary Choir

W. Chenoweth

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (Hymn 606)

Doxology

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND CHORAL RESPONSE

SHARING OF OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

The congregation is invited to share our prayer requests with one another.

*If you would like to share a prayer request, please raise your hand
and the Pastor will invite you to share your need for prayer.*

PRAYERS OF 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.

OFFERING OF OUR TIME AND TALENT

*HYMN 88

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (verses 1, 5, 6, and 7)

*CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

*CHORAL BENEDICTION

Sung to the tune of "Edelweiss"

**Come, O Lord, be with us. Fill us with joy and thanksgiving.
May our hearts, flow with peace. Come with your love and surround us.
Friendship and love, may they bloom and grow, bloom and grow forever.
Bless us now. Bless our friends. Bless all people forever.**

*POSTLUDE

Toccata and Fugue in F

D. Buxtehude

The flowers in the chancel are given to the glory of God.

THIS MORNING'S WORSHIP LEADERS

Rev. Matthew T. Means, Pastor

Doug Terc, Lector

Ken Friese, Director of Music

Dan Degnan, Usher Captain

Roger Ketcham and Bill Roe, Ushers

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US FOR A NEW WORSHIP OPPORTUNITY ...

“SERVICE OF COMFORT AND HOPE”

TOMORROW – MONDAY, DECEMBER 18TH @ 7:30 PM

Is Christmas a time when you remember friends, family, or loved ones who have gone before?

Do you long for a hopeful way to honor the memory of those who are no longer with us?

Are you tired of hearing about all the "bad news" in this world and need a place of quiet rest to be filled with the peace and comfort of the Holy Spirit as you prepare for the coming Christ?

Would you like to join with your church family in giving thanks for the gift of faith and life God has given us through the time we share with our loved ones?

Then come and join us ***TOMORROW NIGHT AT 7:30 PM*** in the Parish Hall ...
as we remember ... give thanks ... and join together in rejoicing for the gifts of faith and life!
We will gather in the week leading up to Christmas to seek God's comfort, be inspired by the hope of Jesus Christ, allow space to name our grief, and remember our dear loved ones.

IN OUR PRAYERS:

New to the prayer list this week:

Rod Tibbetts (Husband of Martha Tibbetts) – health concerns

Continue to pray for those who remain on our prayer list:

Rick Ambrosio and Wendy (Friends of the Worledge Family), Asenath Fuchs, William Gray (Dorothy Mandrakos' father), Dave and Else Haddock, Joan Lobasso, Ken Peterson, Cynde and Robert Raynor (Brett Raynor's parents), Rebecca Raynor (Brett Raynor's sister), Angelica Richter, James Schubauer, Gerry Schult, Laura Jane Tiberia (Joan Lobasso's Daughter), and Grace Youngquist.

Names on our prayer list will remain for a month.

If you would like to add a prayer request, please contact Pastor Means.

Isaiah 35:1-10

Old Testament, p. 663 / P. 811

¹The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.

³ Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.”

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break

forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; ⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸ A highway shall be there and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. ⁹ No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.