

BLACKSBURG PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SERVICE OF WORSHIP FOR THE LORD'S DAY

DECEMBER 17, 2023

Third Sunday of Advent



We are a community that welcomes all.
We are committed to experiencing beautiful worship,
nurturing lifelong growth,
and pursuing justice and love in the world.

Pastor - Rev. Sarah Wiles
Director of Music & Organist - Alice Brooks Sanders
Director of Children & Youth Ministries - Susan Hunter
Coordinator of Church Life - Sarah Windes
Office Manager - Rhonda Waller
Parish Associate - Rev. Emily Rhodes Hunter

❖ Please rise in body or in spirit. We invite you to join in with the words in **bold**.

❖ GATHERING AROUND THE WORD ❖

Thought for Meditation: “All those times your father treated you mean, Our Lady was the voice in you that said, ‘No, I will not bow down to this.’

When you're unsure of yourself, when you start pulling back into doubt and small living, she's the one inside saying, ‘Get up from there and live like the glorious girl you are.’ She's the power inside you, you understand?

And whatever it is that keeps widening your heart, that's Mary, too, not only the power inside you but the love. And when you get down to it, that's the only purpose grand enough for a human life. Not just to love – but to persist in love.” —Sue Monk Kidd, *The Secret Life of Bees*, adapted

Prelude: “An English Christmas”

arr. Douglas Wagner

Welcome and Announcements

Rev. Sarah Wiles

Centering Music: “While We Are Waiting, Come”

WAITING

**While we are waiting, come;
while we are waiting, come.**

**Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel,
while we are waiting, come.**

❖ **Call to Worship**

Sam Woolsey

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

This is the day the Lord has made. **Let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

How does a weary world practice joy?

By dancing, and throwing birthday parties.

By hanging Christmas lights, and holding sleepy babies.

By singing loudly, and looking for good news.

By telling the story of Jesus, and showing up for our community.

There are a million ways to practice joy.

**So, today we sing and pray, speak and listen,
as a way to bring joy into a weary world.**

❖ **Hymn 123:** “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”

CAROL

**It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth,
to touch their harps of gold:
“Peace on the earth, good will to all,
from heaven’s all-gracious King”:
the world in solemn stillness lay,
to hear the angels sing.**

**Still through the cloven skies they come,
with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats
o’er all the weary world:
above its sad and lowly plains
they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o’er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.**

Scroll down for more . . .

Yet with the woes of sin and strife
the world has suffered long;
beneath the heavenly hymn have rolled
two thousand years of wrong;
and we at war on earth hear not
the tidings that they bring;
O, hush the noise and cease the strife
to hear the angels sing!

And you, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow,
look now, for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing:
O, rest beside the weary road,
and hear the angels sing.

For lo, the days are hastening on,
by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world give back the song
which now the angels sing.

Call to Confession

God says, "Don't be afraid."

The angels say, "Don't be afraid."

Jesus says, "Don't be afraid."

Prayer of Confession

Holy One,

in this time of preparing, we struggle to make time for your arrival.

When there are presents to get, we forget your presence among us.

With "so much" to do, we forget the mystery of your Being.

Slow us down. Loosen us up.

Let us laugh at ourselves more freely and love each other more generously.

In the midst of the tinsel and the bustle,

help us see the twinkling joy.

(Silent prayer)

Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear and trust the good news:

by grace our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

❖ Passing of the Peace

The peace of Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

(Worshippers may exchange signs of God's peace, and children may come forward for a time of sharing faith together.)

Lighting of the Advent Candles

Song of Advent: "He Came Down"

He came down that we may have joy; *(sing 3 times)*
hallelujah forevermore.

HE CAME DOWN

❖ HEARING THE WORD ❖

Sharing Faith with Children

Alice Sanders

(Children in 1st grade age and up are invited to remain in the sanctuary. Children in kindergarten or younger may stay in the sanctuary or go downstairs to God's Garden or the nursery for nurturing and care. Please complete a sign-in sticker for each child.)

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

Luke 1:46-55, NRSVUE

46 And Mary said,
 “My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48 for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.
 Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,
49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
 and holy is his name;
50 indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him
 from generation to generation.
51 He has shown strength with his arm;
 he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones
 and lifted up the lowly;
53 he has filled the hungry with good things
 and sent the rich away empty.
54 He has come to the aid of his child Israel,
 in remembrance of his mercy,
55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
 to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”
 God be in our listening,
 God be in our understanding. **Amen.**

Sermon

Rev. Emily Rhodes Hunter

Hymn 100: “My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout”

STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN

**My soul cries out with a joyful shout
that the God of my heart is great,
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things
that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,
and my weakness you did not spurn,
so from east to west shall my name be blest.
Could the world be about to turn?**

Refrain:

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn.**

**Though I am small, my God, my all,
you work great things in me,
and your mercy will last from the depths of the past
to the end of the age to be.
Your very name puts the proud to shame,
and to those who would for you yearn,
you will show your might, put the strong to flight,
for the world is about to turn. (Refrain)**

Scroll down for more . . .

From the halls of power to the fortress tower,
not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware for your justice tears
every tyrant from his throne.
The hungry poor shall weep no more,
for the food they can never earn;
there are tables spread; every mouth be fed,
for the world is about to turn. (Refrain)

Though the nations rage from age to age,
we remember who holds us fast:
God's mercy must deliver us
from the conqueror's crushing grasp.
This saving word that our forebears heard
is the promise which holds us bound,
till the spear and rod can be crushed by God,
who is turning the world around. (Refrain)

Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.	Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.
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Call to Offering

Offertory: "Quia Respexit" from *Magnificat*

Ariana Wyatt, soprano

J.S. Bach

For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:
for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

❖Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise Christ, all creatures here below;
praise Holy Spirit evermore;
praise Triune God whom we adore. Amen.

❖Prayer of Dedication

❖ BEARING THE WORD INTO THE WORLD ❖

❖Hymn 105: "People, Look East"

People, look east. The time is near
of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able;
trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Guest, is on the way.

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
one more seed is planted there.
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
that in course the flower may flourish.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Rose, is on the way.

BESANÇON

Scroll down for more . . .

Birds, though you long have ceased to build,
guard the nest that must be filled.
Even the hour when wings are frozen
God for fledging time has chosen.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Bird, is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim
one more light the bowl shall brim,
shining beyond the frosty weather,
bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Star, is on the way.

Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
with the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

❖Benediction

Postlude: "Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella"

French Carol
arr. Joel Raney

Linda King and Alice Sanders, piano duet



Citations: Call to Worship, Call to Confession, and Prayer for Illumination adapted from Rev. Sarah Speed, sanctifiedart.org. Prayer of Confession adapted from *Before the Amen*.

Art: *Magnificat* by Ben Wildflower, benwildflower.com.

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WELCOME TO WORSHIP!

This is a space for everyone. No matter who you are, no matter what your story is, no matter what—you are welcome here. May this be a time where your breathing slows, your heart opens, and you connect with the Holy One. If you are seeking a church home, we invite you to explore some of what happens in the life of this community.

Serving: Church Opener: Brent Opell

Ushers: Craig and Sarah Woolsey, and Tom and Judy Pospichal

Elder Serving Refreshments: Paula Stith

Nursery and God's Garden Sign-in Stickers (one per child): Complete information about each child and parent(s) on the sign-in sticker.

Headsets for the hard of hearing are available. Speak to an usher to use them for the worship service.

You can send prayer requests for Prayers of the People in Sunday worship and/or to be added to the *MidWeek Update* and website prayer list to Rhonda at (rhonda@blacksburgpres.org).

Text or QR Code to Give: To give by text, send keyword **bpcva** and an amount to phone number **77977** (e.g., bpcva 20). If it is your first time, there will be a brief registration process. To give via QR code, use the camera app on your phone and follow instructions. Thank you for your support of BPC's ministry.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christmas Joy Offering - Supporting our past, present, and future leaders. Did you know . . . ? ✦ Gifts from the Christmas Joy Offering have enabled the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to provide income supplements for nearly 272 retired church workers and housing supplements to help more than 223 individuals remain in their homes or to afford assisted living or long-term care. ✦ The Christmas Joy Offering supports Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, AL. Stillman has been selected as a College of Distinction from 2019-2022 for Christian education, teacher education, support of the military and veteran students, preparing business leaders, and equity and inclusion. Stillman's student population is 87% first-generation in college. Please see the insert for more information. You will find envelopes in the pews for you to make your gift, and you can also donate via blacksburgpres.org/give. Thank you for participating. If we all do a little, it adds up to a lot!



Montgomery County Baby Shop Christmas Tree: *Today is the last day to bring your item(s).* You can also make a financial donation to the Montgomery County Baby Shop via blacksburgpres.org/give.



a light shines in the darkness
Christmas Eve at Blacksburg Presbyterian Church

10:30am | family-friendly service
with pageant for all

7pm | lessons, carols, & candlelight



Celebrate Epiphany!
mark the turning of the year with
an all-church feast & Epiphany party

soup, salad, king cakes
Christmas & Epiphany trivia
star words & prizes

Sunday, January 7, after worship
Fellowship Hall

THIS WEEK

FH-Fellowship Hall, **HCR**-Hatcher Conference Room,
WM-Westminster, **SNC**-Sanctuary, **GS**-Gathering Space

All activities are open to everyone.

Contact Rhonda at rhonda@blacksburgpres.org for more information.

Sun., Dec. 17: Third Sunday of Advent & Christmas Joy Offering

- 10:30 am: Worship Service, SNC

Tues., Dec. 19:

- Morningstars Bible study will resume Tues., Jan. 9, 7:30-9:00
- 9:30-2:00 pm: Quilters, FH

Fri., Dec. 22: Church office will be closed.

Sun., Dec. 24: Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve

- 10:30 am: Family Christmas Eve Service, SNC. There will be a pageant that every child (and child at heart!) who wishes can participate in. There's no rehearsal. Pick out a costume when you arrive and join the fun! We will also light candles at this service. (There is no childcare. All children are welcome in worship--especially the squirmy, noisy ones.)
- 7:00 pm: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols, SNC. (There is no childcare. All children are welcome in worship--especially the squirmy, noisy ones.)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mon-Tues., Dec. 25-26: Church office will be closed.

Wed., Dec. 27: No *MidWeek Update* this week.

Thurs.-Fri., Dec. 28-29: Church office is closed.

Sun., Dec. 31:

- 10:30 am: Worship service, SNC (no childcare; all children are welcome in worship)

Mon., Jan. 1: Church office will be closed.

Sun., Jan. 7:

- 9:00 am: Sunday School and Youth Group resumes, various rooms
- 9:00: Adult Sunday School, WM. More details to come.
- 10:30 am: Epiphany worship with Epiphany stars, SNC
- 11:30: Epiphany luncheon, FH. See announcements for details.

Mon., Jan. 8:

- 12:00-1:30 pm: Deacons meeting, HCR
- 6:00: Hildegard Circle meeting, TBA