**ST. JOHN’S and ST. PAUL’S UCC**

**Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**December 22, 2024**

RINGING OF THE BELL

 THE PRELUDE

 LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH – THEME “LOVE”

 St. John’s: Randy & Lynn Busse

Reader One: O God, we light the fourth candle of Advent, the candle of Love.

 (With the first three candles burning, a family member lights the fourth candle.)

Reader Two: We hear your angel Gabriel and witness the faith of Mary. Fill us with your grace and light.

Reader One: Mary was a young, strong, spiritual woman. Even though her life was not easy, she heard God’s voice and said yes. Her song was a prayer that would uplift those who were downtrodden. Her lyrics shattered the proud and called the world to change. She would bear within her the promised child, Jesus, the Light of the World. This Advent, we respond to God’s beckoning to us as well.

**Congregation: Revealing God, visit us and fill us with your Spirit. Bring your good news to life within us. Give us courage to carry your light into the injustices and shadows of this world. Amen.**

SONG #116 - O *Come, O Come, Emmanuel.* *Verses 1, 2, 6, 7*

\*CALL TO WORSHIP (UCC Worship Ways)

 ONE: Love deeply, creating the wells of kinship,
 **ALL: For in the Body of Christ we belong.**

 ONE: Love boldly, like the spirited colors of a rainbow,

 **ALL: For in the Body of Christ we find peace.**

 ONE: Love joyfully, like the blissful songs in the wind,

 **ALL: For in the Body of Christ we claim our connections.**

\*UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION(UCC Worship Ways)

**Holy Tapestry of Bliss, the patches of memories are stitched together as we tell our stories with you, Loving God. We cherish the individual pieces of our diverse stories, and the beauty of narratives sewed together. We honor the ways these Holy Threads have connected us. May the creation from our connections be like a quilt to our souls, keeping us warm in this season of reflection. Amen.**

SONG (on monitors) – [Breath Of Heaven](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8_475FKJWQ) – Amy Grant

 THE READING OF SCRIPTURE: St. John’s: Jessica Barts St. Paul’s: Cara Wagner

Luke 1:39-55 Mary Visits Elizabeth and Mary’s Song of Praise (NRSVUE)

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

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

 FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US

 THE MESSAGE – Mary’s Song, A Song of Radical Hope

 SONG #106 – My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise

 PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (*Joys and Concerns*)

 THE LORD’S PRAYER (St. John’s: *debts/debtors;* St. Paul’s: sins/sin against us)

**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*/sins), as we forgive (*our debtors*/those who sin against us). And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY (UCC Worship Ways)

 **We reconnect in this space and time to seek God’s call for our lives and our congregations. As part of our spiritual journeys, we share our treasures, time, and talents, bringing God’s light into our world. We do not give to impress God or share offerings because of our shame. Instead, we bring our offerings to celebrate the Body of Christ.**

 BRINGING OUR GIFTS TO GOD

 #785 (*While the offering is brought forward*)

 **We give you but your own, what-e’er the gift may be;**

 **All that we have is yours alone, we give it gratefully.**

UNISON OFFERTORY PRAYER (Adapted from UCC Worship Ways)

 **God of All Hope, Love, Joy and Peace we delight in living in your ways as we create your Realm here on earth. These offerings of talents, treasures, and time are not to appease you but to collaborate with you. As co-creators, we seek your intentions and celebrate your love for us and our neighbors. Amen.**

SONG #122 – Come, O Long-Expected Jesus

ANNOUNCEMENTS

\*THE BENEDICTION (Adapted from UCC Worship Ways)

 ONE: As we seek the ways of God and our Creator’s intentions for our lives, may the Spirit of God enliven us as we love boldly, may the Spirit of God strengthen us as we create paths of peace. May the Spirit of God awaken us as we love generously and widely.

 A season of birth is imminent, for God’s love is with us as we seek our renewal of life. **ALL: With love, compassion, hope, and the faith of Jesus dwelling richly within us until the time of his coming, both now and forevermore. Amen.**

\*THE POSTLUDE