



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT – “GAUDETE”

December 17, 2023

10:00 am

GATHER IN GOD’S NAME

MEDITATION MUSIC

CHIMING OF THE HOUR

WELCOME AND CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH

MINUTE FOR MISSION – Christmas Joy Offering

*please rise in body or spirit, as you are able.

Bold indicates congregational response of word or song.

INTROIT

“Gaudete”

(Rejoice! Christ is born of the virgin Mary.)

CALL TO WORSHIP* *(from Psalm 126)*

*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
We were like those who dream.*

**Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with shouts of joy;**

*Then it was said among the nations,
"The Lord has done great things for them,"*

**The Lord has done great things for us,
And we rejoice.**

*May those who sow in tears
Reap with shouts of joy.*

HYMN* *"My Soul Cries Out (Magnificat)"* 100

LIGHTING THE THIRD CANDLE – Steve and Rosemary Cole

When God's people were surrounded by hardship, suffering, and grief, Isaiah proclaimed, The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed . . . to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

We come today as people who are also surrounded by suffering and grief. And yet, the Spirit hovers among us, tending and anointing, inspiring freedom where there is captivity, declaring blessing in places the world has cursed, and igniting fierce joy where mourning and heartache prevail.

We wait as people who experience hardship and pain, yet we are called to witness to the persistent joy that sustains our life as God's people.

We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, just peace, and fierce joy. May our lives shine with the fierce, tenacious joy of the Light who lives in our hearts as we wait and work for the coming of God's kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

CANDLELIGHTING CAROL *Congregation and Handchimes*
(Handchimes Choir rings 1 verse, then congregation sings)

**O come, thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.**

A TIME WITH CHILDREN

GOSPEL* – John 1:6-8, 19-28

OFFERING OF MUSIC

Adult Choir

"How Shall We Know Him?"

Ann Marie Conner, flute

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

SERMON

"A People God Has Blessed" Linda Dickerson

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE / 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.**

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION*

CHORAL RESPONSE, 123

Congregation and Choir

**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.**

FELLOWSHIP TIME – All are welcome!

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR ALL AGES!

*To those who are weary and need rest;
To all who are lonely and need friends;
To all who mourn and need comfort;
To all who pray,
and to all who do not, but ought;
To all who sin and need a Savior,
And to whosoever comes –
The Church opens wide its doors, and says,
In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
"Welcome."*