



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 24, 2023

10:00 am

MEDITATION MUSIC

CHIMING OF THE HOUR

WELCOME AND CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH

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

Bold indicates congregational response of word or song.

INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP*

Forever is a very long time.

We will sing of God's steadfast love forever.

Forever is a very long time.

God's faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

Forever is a very long time.

We will trust in God forever!

HYMN*

"Gentle Mary Laid Her Child"

146

LIGHTING THE FOURTH CANDLE –

When the angel Gabriel visited Mary, announcing God's plan for her to conceive and give birth to the Messiah, "Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'" And yet, only a few months later, Mary sings to Elizabeth, My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.

We, like Mary, hear God's call to be part of making God's dream for our salvation and flourishing a reality, and we question, "How can this be? I am only..." Yet, like Mary, the "onlys" that make us hesitate are gifts God can and will use as God's love transforms us into bearers of good news.

We wait as people who have encountered divine Love that disrupts the status quo and ushers us into abundant life marked by mutual love and peace that flows from the flourishing of all people.

We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, our just peace, our fierce joy, and the love that transforms us. May Love grow within us, transforming us into bold witnesses of God's salvation with our voices and our lives. Amen.

CANDLELIGHTING CAROL

Congregation Choir

**O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.**

GOSPEL* – Luke 1:26-38

OFFERING OF MUSIC

Paul Ruszler

"Christmas Candles"

GOSPEL (part 2)* – Luke 1:46b-55

SERMON

"Mary, Did You Know?"

Linda Dickerson

OFFERING OF MUSIC

Adult Choir

"Hodie Veni Christus" (This day, come Christ)

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.**

HYMN*

"In the Bleak Midwinter"

144

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION* - Romans 16:25-27

CHORAL RESPONSE, #137

Congregation and Choir

**He came down that we may have love;
he came down that we may have love;
he came down that we may have love;
hallelujah forevermore.**

TONIGHT, 7:30 – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

UPCOMING

December 25-January 1 – Church Office closed

December 31, 10:00 am – Service of Carols

January 7 – February 11 – Sermon Series: *Who is This Jesus?*

January 7 – *Sharing Light*

January 14 – *The Reveal (Baptism of the Lord)*

January 21 – *An Urgent Mission*

January 28 – *Go Tell!*

February 4 – *Secrets*

February 11 – *Exposed (Transfiguration)*

January 10, 1:30 pm – Women's Bible Study

January 14, 11:00 – Annual Meeting of the Congregation

January 14, 3:00 – Martin Luther King, Jr., celebration
Church on Main, Blacksburg

January 20 – Church Officers' Retreat

January 21 – Ordination/Installation of new officers

February 14 – Ash Wednesday, Lent begins

*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."*