

**BETHEL MURDOCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
9602 Murdoch-Goshen Road, Loveland, OH 45140  
**December 19, 2021 10:30 a.m.**  
**Celebrating 207 years of Faithful Service to Our God**  
**The Fourth Sunday of Advent**  
***Blue Christmas Service***

***We Enter Into God's Presence***

**WELCOME**

L: This is the day that the Lord has made

**P: Let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

**THE PEACE**

L: Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us forgive one another.  
The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

**P: And also with you.**

**“SURELY THE PRESENCE”**

**Surely the presence of the LORD is in this place.**

**I can feel His mighty power and His grace.**

**I can hear the brush of angel's wings, I see glory on each face.**

**Surely the presence of the LORD is in this place.**

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES**

We light these candles as a sign of the coming light of Christ. We light this candle for Hope. We light this candle for Peace. We light this candle for Joy. We light this candle for Love.

Advent means coming.

We are preparing ourselves for the days when the nations shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing.

The Lord will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel (God with us).

Let us walk in the light of the Lord.

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

L: Shower, O heavens, from above,

**P: and let the skies rain down righteousness;**

L: let the earth open,

**P: that salvation may spring up.**

### **OPENING PRAYER**

God of grace, your eternal Word took flesh among us when Mary placed her life at the service of your will. Prepare our hearts for his coming again; keep us steadfast in hope and faithful in service, that we may receive the coming of his kingdom, for the sake of Jesus Christ the ruler of all, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **HYMN: B-5“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence”**

1 Let all mortal flesh keep silence, And with fear and trembling stand;  
Ponder nothing earthly-minded, For with blessing in His hand  
Christ our God, to earth descendeth Our full homage to demand.

2 King of kings, yet born of Mary, As of old on earth He stood,  
Lord of lords in human vesture, In the body and the blood  
He will give to all the faithful His own self for heav'nly food.

3 Rank on rank the host of heaven Spreads its vanguard on the way  
As the Light from Light, descendeth From the realms of endless day,  
That the powers of hell may vanquish As the darkness clears away.

4 At His feet the six-winged seraph; Cherubim with sleepless eye,  
Veil their faces to the presence As with ceaseless voice they cry:  
“Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, Lord Most High!”

### **CALL TO CONFESSION:**

Remember that our Lord Jesus can sympathize with us in our weaknesses, since in every respect he was tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with boldness approach the throne of grace, that we may receive



3 He gave his life for us, the pledge of salvation;  
He took up on himself the sins of the nation. *Refrain*

4 He conquered sin and death, he truly has risen.  
And he will share with us his heavenly vision.

**MESSAGE:** *Sharing Pain, Finding Peace*

One: God of abundant mercy, you have given us grace to pray with one heart and one voice, even though our hearts are broken and our voices tremble with grief and sorrow. Comfort, comfort, Lord, your Holy people. Comfort those of us who sit in darkness, mourning 'neath our sorrow's load. Speak to us of the peace that awaits us, of the balm of healing for our weary and wounded souls. We ask all this, trusting in the promise you have made to hear the prayers of two or three who have gathered in the Name of your Holy Child, Jesus.

**All: Amen.**

***Psalm 23, read in unison***

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

**HYMN: *O Come, O come Emmanuel, vs 1 and 2***

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel.  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.

*Refrain:* Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O Wisdom from on high,  
Who orders all things mightily;

To us the path of knowledge show,  
And teach us in her ways to go.

*Refrain:* Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to you, O Israel.

**A reading from Hebrew Scripture, selected verses from Isaiah 40**

"Comfort, comfort my people" says your God. "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her that the time of service is ended ... Look up to the heavens! Who made the stars, if not the One who drills them like an army, calling each one by its own name? So mighty is God's power and strength that not one fails to answer. Israel, why then do you complain that our God does not know your troubles or care if you suffer injustice? Our God, the everlasting God, the creator of the farthest parts of the earth, never grows tired or weary. No one can fathom the depths of God's understanding. God gives power to the faint and strength to the powerless. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

***HYMN: O Come, O Come Emmanuel (vs 3 and 4)***

O come, O come, thou Lord of might,  
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height  
in ancient times didst give the law,  
in cloud, and majesty, and awe.

*Refrain:* Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, thou Branch of Jesse's tree,  
free them from Satan's tyranny  
that trust thy mighty power to save,  
and give them victory o'er the grave.

*Refrain:* Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to you, O Israel.

**A Reading from the Psalms, Psalm 22**

ONE: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the words of my groaning?

***ALL: O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but I find no rest.***

ONE: In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.

***ALL: It was you who took me from the womb, you who kept me safe upon my mother's breast; since my mother bore me, you have been my God.***

ONE: Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

***ALL: God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted; God does not hide from me. When I cry to God, God hears me. Thanks be to God!***

### **A Gospel Reading, Matthew 11:28-29**

"Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

### ***HYMN: O Come, O Come Emmanuel (vs 5)***

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.

*Refrain:* Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to you, O Israel.

### ***We Respond with Thanksgiving***

#### **HYMN: B-85 "What Wondrous Love Is This"**

1 What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss  
To bear the heavy cross for my soul, for my soul,  
To bear the heavy cross for my soul, for my soul!

2 To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing;  
To God and to the Lamb I will sing;

To God and to the Lamb, who is the great I AM,  
While millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing,  
While millions join the theme, I will sing!

3 And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on;  
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on.  
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful be  
And through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on,  
And through eternity I'll sing on!

### **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen. *(The Apostles' Creed-Ecumenical)*

**OFFERING (Please remember to mail your offering to the church)**

**JOYS & CONCERNS OF THE CONGREGATION – (Please send your joys and concerns to the church email and we will publish them in the weekly ENews)**

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

God who is with us, in this season of looking forward, of anticipating the celebration of your Son's birth and return in glory, we often find ourselves uncomfortable, uneasy, worried and sad. The lights and gaiety, the music, the bright joy around us, often make us more unquiet, more out of step, feeling even more disconnected and different.

Some of these feelings come from false expectations. Others come from real situations and issues that face us or those we love. Some are from events we may influence and some are beyond our control. Trusting in your grace and provision, we name these situations and face the pain and

dislocation they cause us. We claim your promise to companion us in bearing them. We claim your steadfast love for us, knowing you will help us find peace for our troubled spirits. We claim your wise and merciful power, that you will meet each need as is best for us.

*Silence*

God of Light and Life, we light this candle for all those who are struggling with issues involving physical or mental health. We especially remember those struggling with cancer, depression, or thoughts of suicide. May its light remind us all of the healing available to us in Christ Jesus. Hear our prayers that anguish be minimized and your good plan fulfilled for each who suffer.

*Silence*

We light this candle for all those who are struggling with issues involving financial concerns, job loss, seemingly insurmountable debt. May its light remind us all that you are the Great Provider, you will give us our daily bread. Empower us to take the steps we need to solve these problems. Draw us to the right people and programs to help us.

*Silence*

We light this candle for all those who grieve. You know our deepest need, you understand our pain of lost dreams, lost opportunities, the separation of death. May its light remind us that we are not orphaned, we are not alone. Grant us grace that in pain we may find comfort, in sorrow hope, and in death resurrection.

*Silence*

We light this candle for all those who wrestle with the chains of addiction. Help us to name that which enslaves us and face it: food, alcohol, drugs, pornography, shopping, escapism, self-medication, and self-abuse in all its forms. May this candle bring your light to those secret, and not so secret, activities of imprisonment. Hear our prayers for deliverance and freedom; help us and those we love break the hold of these evils.

*Silence*

We light this candle for all those who are victims of violence in any of its forms. May its light lead us to peace, safety, and truth. Pour forth encouragement to claim your help in healing physically and spiritually, to

trust in your justice, to find assistance, to resist blaming ourselves, to be confident in the future you have planned for us, a future full of hope.

*Silence*

We light this candle for all those who are experiencing the pain of broken relationships with family, children, spouses, and friends. May its light remind us of the pure communion you desire for all your creation. Our desire for this same communion makes estrangement so painful. Lead us to relinquish the hold broken relationships have on us, to forgive ourselves for our contribution to the breach, to forgive those who have hurt us, to take the steps to mend that relationship, if possible. Lord, we know that sometimes we suffer from a broken relationship with someone who is now dead. Help us to prayerfully examine, receive and extend forgiveness in that situation, that we may live again.

*Silence*

We light this candle for all those who are suffering the consequences of war, famine and unbridled disease. May its light remind us of your holy calling to everyone who believes you are the light of the world. Change the hearts of all who resort to violence, who seek revenge. Protect those who find themselves far from home serving their nations or the needy. We know you are in the midst of those in anguish and pray that your healing presence will be seen, felt, and embraced. Reveal to us how to join in your saving work- to make tangible gifts to alleviate suffering, to support those on the front lines of natural and manmade disasters, to pray unceasingly for peace in our families, our neighborhoods, our world.

*Silence*

We light this candle for all those who are estranged from you, who are besieged with doubts, who are overwhelmed by the world and do not claim your presence in their lives. We pray for them, and therefore ourselves, for we confess that each of us knows this condition. Lord, may the light of your love lead us all home to you.

*Silence*

We ask all these things in the strong name of Jesus. It is in the name of the same Jesus Christ our Lord that we pray the prayer he taught us,

**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.

### ***We are Sent Out to Love and Serve***

#### **HYMN:B-29 “Go, Tell it on the Mountain”**

*Refrain:*

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and everywhere;  
go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

1 While shepherds kept their watching O'er silent flocks by night,  
Behold, throughout the heavens There shone a holy light. *Refrain:*

2 The shepherds feared and trembled When lo! above the earth,  
Rang out the angel chorus That hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain:*

3 Down in a lowly manger The humble Christ was born,  
And God sent us salvation That blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain:*

#### **Charge and Benediction**

My friends, life is short, and we do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who make this earthly pilgrimage with us, so be swift to love, and make haste to do kindness, and the blessing of God, who comes to us as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be upon you and all whom you love and pray for this day, and forever more.

#### **Choral Amen**

#### **Postlude**

*Blue Christmas* liturgy by Ann Fontaine