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Facebook: Bethel United Church of Christ – Kansas City

Bethel United Church of Christ Bulletin

December 13, 2020

"May we be innkeepers ready to find a place for our Lord, may we be wise enough to follow a star. May we be shepherds open to the possibility of miracles. O Lord, may we find a kneeling place in that stable!"

Ann Weems, "[Reaching for Rainbows*](#)"

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING MUSIC

"God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen"

Isaac Faust, piano

CALL TO WORSHIP (*responsive*)*

Today we celebrate our children.

Who laugh out loud, who like to be tickled, who whisper in loud voices,

who run and laugh when they fall, who ask questions,

who hug us in a hurry and rush outside without their hats!

Today we celebrate children who are so busy living they don't have time for our hang-ups!

And we celebrate adults who are as little children!

PRAYER OF INVOCATION (*unison*)

O God, be among us today as we hear our children share the story of Jesus with words from scripture, with instruments and with song. Light up our memories of sharing the awesome story of Jesus' birth. May we create new memories this Christmas season as we hold all our children in our hearts. Amen.

HYMN –

"We Three Kings"

Levi Pierson joined by Liam, Gary & Mary Ann Pierson

LIGHTING THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE-"JOY"

The Faust Family

JOY*

"Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say rejoice."

Philippians 4:4

Advent is about joy. But our times seem little suited for rejoicing. Our culture entertains and intoxicates, excites and numbs, but rejoicing seems a foreign notion. Joy cannot be purchased or peddled. You can't plan for it or train for it. It doesn't fit into a well-ordered life and is not FDA approved.

Joy comes only when least expected. We rejoice only when life has been turned on its ear; when, whatever we feared, whatever we steeled ourselves against, some gift of God has presented itself instead. When we rein in our love to protect ourselves from pain, when we curtail our hopes from fear of disillusionment, when we equip ourselves with cynicism to avoid looking the fool, we do so at the expense of joy.

Pleasure floats on the surface of life. Happiness flits across a moment or an hour. But JOY springs from the depths.

Joy is new life beating in a heart that has been broken. Joy is awakening to a fair morning from a nightmare of reality.

Joy is a flight sunward on wings you had forgotten you had. Joy is the sound of laughter erupting from an extended time of grief.

Joy is God's melody amid the discord of life, a song carrying the hope of eternity and touching the chords of longing in our souls.

Today we light our Third Advent Candle and remember the JOY of Mary as she awaits the birth of her son Jesus. (congregation sings)

One Candle is Lit #128

Come, festively sing while awaiting the birth,

join angels in dancing from heaven to earth.

Wave banners of good news, lift high thankful praise.

One candle is lit for the joy of these days.

Let us pray: (unison)

God of Rejoicing, we wait for the birth of our Savior, the one who brings HOPE and PEACE. We walk with JOY as we continue our Advent journey. Amen

MEDITATION

"O Lord, You Were Born"

Pastor Karen Aitkens

A Reading from Reaching for Rainbows by Ann Weems*

PASTORAL PRAYER/LORD'S PRAYER (...forgive us our sins)

HYMN

"Deck the Halls"

Eleanor Faust, piano

OFFERING OF OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS TO GOD

Invitation

Offertory

"Santa Claus is Coming to Town"

Bailey Fleener, soloist

Prayer of Dedication

*Bethel's Children Presents:
"Our First Children's Christmas Talent Show"*

Ty Hendrix – reading *Santa Surprise Book*

Lacy Fleener – *Rocking Around the Gymnastics Mat*

Sidney Hendrix – *Scripture Reading*

Levi, Gary & Mary Ann Pierson – *The First Noel*

James and Emma Marshall – *Scripture Reading*

Claira Faust – “*Amazing Grace at Christmas*”

Liam Pierson – *Scripture Reading*

CLOSING CAROL#143

"Joy to the World"

Lily Willis, soloist

COMMISSION & BENEDICTION (*responsive*)

Go from this place with hearts filled with HOPE, PEACE and JOY!

We are waiting and watching for the Christ child to enter into our hearts.

May God's love surround you, Christ's peace be with you and the Holy Spirit abide in you.

And the people proclaim:

We give thanks for our amazing children and their wisdom! Amen.

POSTLUDE

"Away in the Manger"

Dominic Achille, baritone horn

A special thanks to Jeremy, our children and parents and all others who helped with this special presentation. The Spirit of Christmas has been placed in our hearts! What JOY we have shared today as we have watched our children share their talent.

Reminder: Next Sunday, the Fourth Sunday of Advent, we will be watching a favorite cantata from the past. Be ready for Christmas to come into your hearts again. Share the link to our YouTube with family and friends!!