Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church

December 22, 2024



I cannot tell you
how the light comes.

What I know
is that it is more ancient
than imagining.

That it travels
across an astounding expanse to
reach us.

That it loves
searching out
what is hidden,
what is lost,
what is forgotten
or in peril
or in pain.

That it has a fondness
for the body,
for finding its way
toward flesh,
for tracing the edges of form,
for shining forth through the eye,
the hand,
the heart.

I cannot tell you
how the light comes
but that it does.
That it will.
That it works its way
into the deepest dark
that enfolds you,
though it may seem
long ages in coming
or arrive in a shape
you did not foresee.

And so
may we this day
turn ourselves toward it.
May we lift our faces
to let it find us.
May we bend our bodies
to follow the arc it makes.
May we open
and open more
and open still
to the blessed light
that comes.

Jan Richardson

Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church

SERVICE OF WORSHIP

4th Sunday of Advent

December 22, 2024 11:00 AM

GREETINGS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE "The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came"
Arr. Anne Krentz
Beth Meriwether, Flute

***THE COMING OF THE LIGHT**
Kara Nash Harrod & Katherine Harrod

We have lit three candles—for hope, for peace, and for joy. Today we light the fourth candle—the candle of love. With this flame we signify the love of God that surrounds and fills us at all times, but which we recognize in a unique way in the Christmas story. There is no greater power than the love of God. It is stronger than rulers and empires, stronger than grief or despair, stronger even than death. We love, because God loves us.

Sung Response

O come, Desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind;
bid envy, strife, and discord cease;
fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

Loving God, we open ourselves to you this Christmas season.
As these candles are lit, light our lives with your imagination.
Bless us with the creative power of hope.
Teach us the peace that comes from justice.
Fill us with a joy that cannot be contained, but must be shared.
Magnify your love within us, as we walk in the light of Christ.

***HYMN 105** "People, Look East"
BESANÇON

1 People, look east. The time is near
of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able;
trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Guest, is on the way.

2 Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
one more seed is planted there.
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
that in course the flower may flourish.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Rose, is on the way.

3 Birds, though you long have ceased to build,
guard the nest that must be filled.
Even the hour when wings are frozen
God for fledging time has chosen.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Bird, is on the way.

4 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim
one more light the bowl shall brim,
shining beyond the frosty weather,
bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Star, is on the way.

5 Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
with the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Holy God,
We gather as your people, moved by
the beauty of this room,
the memories that fill our hearts,
the need that is etched on our neighbor's face,
the fathomless gift of your love.

Forgive our half-hearted incarnations of that love.
Come to us now, until we
trust you more than the governors of this world,
receive the witness of unlikely angels,
amaze our neighbors with unsettling news,
and tremble with a song that must be shared…

Silent prayer

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

…in the name of Jesus, the resurrection and the life, let us declare:

Our stories are known; our sins are forgiven;
our work has just begun.

***RESPONSE** sung to tune #110

Love has come: a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high.

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

A TIME FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US Rachel Sparling

Children and youth are invited to come forward.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION Natalie Daugherty

FIRST READING Micah 5:2-5a *The Message*

But you, Bethlehem, David's country,
the runt of the litter—
From you will come the leader
who will shepherd-rule Israel.
He'll be no upstart, no pretender.
His family tree is ancient and distinguished.
Meanwhile, Israel will be in foster homes
until the birth pangs are over and the child is born,
And the scattered children come back
home to the family of Israel.
He will stand tall in his shepherd-rule by God's strength,
centered in the majesty of God-Revealed.
And the people will have a good and safe home,
for the whole world will hold him in respect—

Peacemaker of the world!

ANTHEM The Angel Gabriel arr. Richard Shephard

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
his wing as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
"All hail," said he, "thou lowly maiden Mary,
most highly favored lady, "Gloria!

"For know a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
all generations laud and honor thee,
Thy Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold,
most highly favored lady," Gloria!

And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,
"Most highly favored lady," Gloria!

SECOND READING Luke 1:39-56

SERMON Margaret LaMotte Torrence

***HYMN 100** "My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout"
STAR OF COUNTY DOWN

1 My soul cries out with a joyful shout
that the God of my heart is great,
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things
that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,
and my weakness you did not spurn,
so from east to west shall my name be blest.
Could the world be about to turn?

Refrain:
My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn.

2 Though I am small, my God, my all,
you work great things in me,
and your mercy will last from the depths of the past
to the end of the age to be.
Your very name puts the proud to shame,
and to those who would for you yearn,
you will show your might, put the strong to flight,
for the world is about to turn. (Refrain)

3 From the halls of power to the fortress tower,
not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware for your justice tears
every tyrant from his throne.
The hungry poor shall weep no more,
for the food they can never earn;
there are tables spread; every mouth be fed,
for the world is about to turn. (Refrain)

4 Though the nations rage from age to age,
we remember who holds us fast:
God's mercy must deliver us
from the conqueror's crushing grasp.
This saving word that our forebears heard
is the promise which holds us bound,
till the spear and rod can be crushed by God,
who is turning the world around. (Refrain)

***AFFIRMATION** John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things came into being through him,
and without him not one thing came into being.
What has come into being in him was life,
and the life was the light of all people.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not overcome it.

WELCOMING NEW MEMBER DENNIS RILEY
with his wife, Cindy, an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Covenant Church

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE
Jim Cotter's paraphrase of Psalm 72/Hymn 158

O God, give wisdom to those who govern us,
a sense of justice to those who wield power,
that they may frame laws that are life-giving,
that the poor and the weak may breathe freely.
May they defend the cause of the needy,
save the abandoned and orphans,
disarm the rebellious and violent.

Born in the night, Mary's child,
a long way from your home:
coming in need, Mary's child,
born in a borrowed room.

May such wisdom endure like the sun and moon,
giving light from one age to the next.
May justice rain down like showers
that water the new-sown fields.
In our days may justice flourish,
and abundance of peace till the moon be no more.

Clear shining light, Mary's child,
your face lights up our way:
Light of the world, Mary's child,
dawn on our darkened day.

May wisdom reign from sea to sea,
following the great rivers to the end of the earth.
May folly bow down to truth,
the enemies of justice lick the dust.
May all the rulers of the peoples seek wisdom,
the nations serve the ways of justice and truth.

Truth of our life, Mary's child,
you tell us God is good:
yes, it is true, Mary's child.
shown on your cross of wood.

Those who are wise deliver the needy when they call,
the weak and those who have no one to speak for them.
They will rescue them from oppression and violence,
and their lives are precious in their sight.

Hope of the world, Mary's child,
you're coming soon to reign:
King of the earth, Mary's child,
walk in our streets again.

***CHARGE** (responsive)

Depart in peace, and take with you the certain knowledge
That God is always coming into the world.

We will seek God, not in a long ago stable or ancient manger,
but in the people we meet and the depths of our own hearts.

May the blessing of Christmas make you a blessing to others;
May the peace of the Christ pervade all that you do.

We will welcome the challenge of discipleship.
We will offer ourselves as God's own.
We will go forth in hope, peace, joy, and love.

***BENEDICTION**

POSTLUDE

*Please stand as you are able

CHURCH STAFF
Margaret LaMotte Torrence, Transitional Pastor
Ted Stewart, Interim Director of Music

Liturgists: Natalie Daugherty; Cadence, Carolynne, and Harriet Cowal
Elder of the Day: Sharon Lytle
Coffee Hour Host: Sally Broughton

ANNOUNCEMENTS

STEWARDSHIP Stewardship Commitments have continued to arrive, and the session is grateful to share that at the time of printing, we have received commitments of **$200,756 toward our $224,000 challenge goal.** You are a remarkably generous congregation. The session will not finalize the budget until January, and would welcome last minute additions, with the hope of moving closer to that goal!

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING This annual offering is being collected through December. Offering envelopes are available in the entryway.

COMMUNITY JOYS AND CONCERNS: If you would like to add or update a prayer request, please contact the church office.

We celebrate: New member Dennis Riley, and his wife, Cindy, who is an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Covenant Church ◦ encouraging results in **Jon Hettrick's** most recent round of medical tests ◦ new roofs, a newly refurbished fellowship hall, and a new piano to offer in service to God and our community

We remember in prayer: The family of **Carol Lee Joslin, Blake Joslin's mother**, following her death on December 10 ◦ **Dina Taylor, Barbara Escalante's sister,** recovering from surgery in California on December 2, for a brain bleed. ◦ **Wynee Bullerdick, daughter of Rodney and Sharon Lytle** as she collaborates with her doctor to determine the cause of her illness. ◦ all who continue to be affected by loss caused by recent storms. In our congregation, we remember especially **Andrew Tripp, Cindy and Dennis Riley, Jackie Wintle, Joyce Cucinella,** and **Bob, the father of Natalie's partner Jeff** ◦ **Donna Eagle Joslin,** healing from wrist surgery. ◦ **Amanda Branscombe,** as she continues to recover from spinal fusion surgery ◦ **Bill Christy,** as he continues to heal following a heart transplant ◦ **Susan Laney**, receiving therapy at home ◦ **Bubba Lytle, Rodney and Sharon's son**, making excellent progress recovering from a serious motorcycle accident ◦ **Thurman Slone**, **Joyce Cucinella's brother,** now under Hospice care ◦ **Jackie Ligon Cole** ◦ **Pat Crumpler** ◦ **Martha Dugger** ◦ **Rick Garrison** ◦ **Houston Huggins** (**Beth Meriwether's brother**) ◦ **Erika Lytle** ◦ **Fran Roberts' sister-in-law, Linda Briggs** ◦ **Jon Hettrick and his family** ◦ **Marjorie Hettrick** ◦ **Shane Reece** (**Nancy Garrison's son**) ◦ **Pat Wilson's son, Kell**

BOOK GROUP The Warren Wilson Book Group will hold its first meeting of 2024 **at noon on January 9 in the Church Parlor.** Bring your lunch and enjoy some fellowship from 12-12:30. At 12:30 Carolyn will lead our discussion of ***Yankee Stranger*** by Elswyth Thane. So if one of your resolutions is to read more in 2025 please join us! New members are always welcome.

ONLINE DIRECTORY UPDATES If you haven't stopped by to check the table in the entryway to check that we have your **contact information** correct in the directory, we'd love for you to do that TODAY! And if you haven't had a **recent photo** taken for the directory, please see Sally Broughton or Sarah Anne Eller TODAY! We'd like to get everything updated for the new year ahead!

END OF YEAR GIFTS If you plan to make a year-end gift, please note these deadlines. To have your gifts counted as 2024 income, you must postmark your checks (or deliver them to the church) by December 31. For online gifts, the Presbyterian Foundation must process the payment by **December 31.**

Cover Photo by Airam Dato-on on Unsplash
Advent Candle Liturgy by Jeanyne Slettom (adapted)