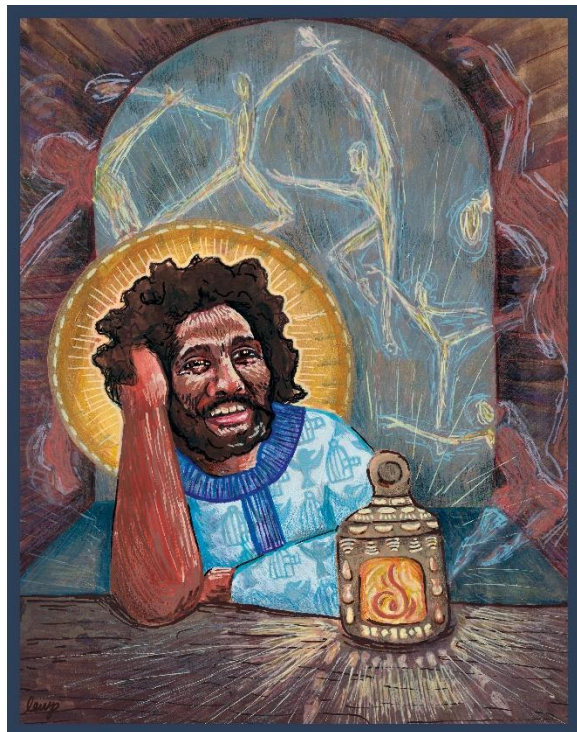


Living Out God's Call To Joy and to Justice



First Presbyterian Church
McAllen, Texas
Advent Communion Worship
Sunday, December 7, 2025

Lauren Wright Pittman
Hope Like a Dancer

Opening Sentences

- In this Advent season, we are exploring the theme: *What Do You Fear? Insisting on Hope This Advent.*
- Today we acknowledge, that when we're running out of hope, God is at work.
- Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship.

Prelude

Call to Worship

Family of faith, God is at work!

God is healing and creating,
redeeming and dreaming,
calling and sending,
listening and loving.

Yes, indeed, God is at work!

So may we worship our God who never gives up.

May we worship our God who holds onto hope. Amen.

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates;
behold the King of glory waits;
the King of kings is drawing near;
the Savior of the world is here.

Fling wide the portals of your heart;
make it a temple, set apart
from earthly use for heaven's employ,
adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come! I open wide
my heart to thee; here, Lord, abide.
Let me thy inner presence feel;
thy grace and love in me reveal.

Lighting the Advent Wreath

In a world full of fear, where do you see glimmers of peace?

**We see glimmers of peace in the quiet of early morning,
when people shake hands,
when loved ones say they're sorry,
and when the church sings together.**

You are right. Even in a fearful world,
peace is all around us.

Today we light the candle of peace
as a reminder of this good news.

May this flicker of light help us remember that
in a fearful world, peace is present.

We only have to look for it.



The Candle of Peace is lit.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Choral Response

Light One Candle, v. 1-2

GG #85

Light one candle to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.
He shall bring salvation to Israel, God fulfills the promise.

Light two candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.
He shall feed the flock like a shepherd, gently lead them homeward.

Call to Confession

Near the end of his ministry, John the Baptist reached out to Jesus with a heart full of anxiety. John was in jail. He knew he might not get out, so he asked Jesus, “Did I make a mistake? Am I making a difference here? Or did I get it all wrong?”

Like John, let us be fully honest with Jesus about our innermost thoughts. We can pour our heart out to God because God always meets us with grace, tenderness, and mercy.

So friends, let us go to God in prayer. Let us be honest, just like John the Baptist. Let us pray.

Prayer of Confession

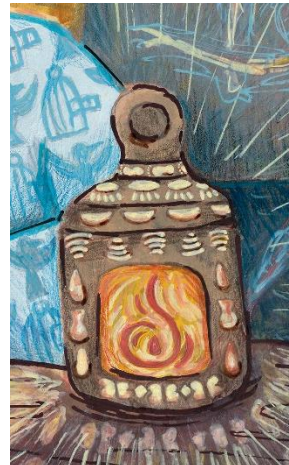
**On-the-move God,
we have every reason to hold onto hope.
We have every reason to believe that spring will come,
that flowers will bloom, that the sun will rise.
And yet, too often hope slips through our fingers.
With anxious hearts, we cry out to you,
“Will change ever come? Will things ever get better?
Will I ever make a difference?”
Soothe our wandering hearts and show us the places
where the sun is shining.
Show us the places where you are on the move.
With open hearts we pray. Amen.**

Words of Forgiveness

Family of faith,
in our honesty,
we are heard.
In our worries,
we are held.
In our failings,
we are forgiven.
In our fear,
we are not alone.

Friends, this is the good news of the gospel!

**When we’re running out of hope, God is still at work.
Thanks be to God! Amen.**



O Lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet you, my hope, my heart's delight!
O kindle, Lord most holy, a lamp within my breast,
to do in spirit lowly all that may please you best.

Love caused your incarnation; love brought you down to me;
your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty.
O love beyond all telling, that led you to embrace
in love, all loves excelling, our lost and fallen race.

You come, O Lord, with gladness, in mercy and goodwill,
to bring an end to sadness and bid our fears be still.
In patient expectation we live for that great day
when your renewed creation your glory shall display.

Passing the Peace of Christ

The peace of our Lord be with you all. / **And also with you.**

The Life of the ChurchTime with the Younger ChurchPrayer for Illumination

Merciful God,
we need bread and we need laughter.
We need music and we need a hand to hold.
We need a chair to sit in and we need work to do.
But maybe more than anything,
we need your Word and a reason to hope.
So move through this space today
and speak to us as only you can.
Speak a word of hope deep into our weary bones.
For we need bread and we need laughter,
but most of all, we need you.
Amen.

A Reading from Isaiah

Isaiah 43:19-21

¹⁹ I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
²⁰ The wild animals will honor me,
the jackals and the ostriches,
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
²¹ the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.



T. Denise Anderson
Something in the Water

Anthem

Gospel Reading

Matthew 11:1-11

11 Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities.

² When John heard in prison what the Messiah^[a] was doing, he sent word by his^[b] disciples ³ and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” ⁴ Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What, then, did you go out to see? Someone^[c] dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹ What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet?^[d] Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written,

‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.’

¹¹ “Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

The Word of the Lord / **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

Affirmation of Faith

**We have seen the valley.
We have seen a sky without stars.
We have seen the longest night,
and still we believe.
We believe in a with-us God.
We believe in the hope of tomorrow.
We believe that good news is louder than fear.
We believe this good news is for all people.
So even when our knees shake,
even when our voices tremble,
even when fear is all around us,
we will hold onto that good news.

We will reach for each other.
We will look for God in our midst.
We will sing songs of joy.
We will proclaim: *Unto us, love is born.***

Hymn It Came Upon the Midnight Clear, v. 1-3, 5 GG #123

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:
“Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven’s all-gracious King”
the world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats o’er all the weary world:
above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o’er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long;
beneath the heavenly hymn have rolled two thousand years of wrong;
and we at war on earth hear not the tidings that they bring;
O, hush the noise and cease the strife to hear the angels sing!

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.

Invitation to the Offering

The world tells us to fear scarcity;
the world encourages us to hold onto what we have
for the sake of our own security.

Our faith tells us to trust in God's abundance;
our faith compels us to share what we have
for the sake of God's kingdom.

Let us gratefully and generously
bring our tithes and offerings.

Today we are also receiving the Power of Hope offering,
which provides assistance for members of this church community.

Offertory

Act of Dedication Now the Heavens Start to Whisper, v. 3 GG #94

Christ, eternal Sun of justice, Christ, the rose of wisdom's seed,
come to bless with fire and fragrance hours of yearning, hurt, and need.
In the lonely, in the stranger, in the outcast, hid from view:
child who comes to grace the manger, teach our hearts to welcome you.

Offertory Prayer

God of abundance,
we pray that the gifts we share
might further your vision of a world
of justice, righteousness, equity, and peace
for all your children. Amen.

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

Invitation to the Lord's Table

This is our Lord's table.

Here, we never need to fear that we are not welcome.

Here, we never need to fear that there is not enough.

At this table, there is enough room, enough food, enough love for everyone.

All are invited to this joyful feast.

You are invited. You are welcome.

Come.

Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

Let us pray:

With-us God, we live in a fearful world.

If we're honest, we come to the Table today
with the taste of fear on our tongues.

We come to this Table carrying our anxiety.

We come to this Table asking for guidance.

We come to this Table with all of life's "what-ifs".

But you do not disregard our fear.

You do not brush it under the rug or call us foolish.

You do not ignore the realities in front of us.

You do not dish out hurtful platitudes,
telling us to "toughen up" or "power through".

Instead, you meet us here.

You listen to our fears.

You remind us that we are not alone.

You surround us with people who love us.

You show us where we are strong.

You walk beside us.

And you give us a new song to sing.

So today we pray, gracious God:

replace the fear on our tongues with words of hope and songs of joy.

As we come to the Table, pour out your Spirit on this bread and cup.

Remind us that even in a fearful world, you are on the move.

Remind us that even in a fearful world, you are here,
inviting us to the Table, nourishing our spirits,
reminding us that we belong, calling us by name.

Instill that good news in us, for this is a joyful feast.

Fear is not the loudest voice today.

What a gift that is. We thank you for it.

Now with hope for a better tomorrow,

we join our voices together to pray as your Son has taught us, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven ...

Sharing Bread and Cup

The body of Christ, the Bread of Heaven / The Cup of Salvation.

The Sacrament is Carried Beyond the Sanctuary

We send you out with this bread and cup
to share the feast of the risen Lord.

**We who are many are one body,
for we all partake of the one bread.**

Prayer after Communion

Loving God,
in a world racked with fear,
you gather us together.
You set the table;
you meet us here.
You nourish our bodies
as you nourish our spirits.
You remind us that this is a joyful feast.
So send us out into the world
with renewed courage,
with renewed hope,
with renewed conviction.
Help us to feed others as you have fed us. Amen.

Hymn

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

GG #132

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss; Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door, and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave: Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

Charge and Benediction

Congregational Response My Soul Cries Out, *refrain*

GG #100

*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.*

Postlude

Today's Worship Leaders:

Rev. Kathryn J. Escandell

Mike Hudler

Nancy Pruneda

Beverly Avila

Robert Garza

Ale Pacheco

FPC Chancel Choir

Liturgy in this worship service has been adapted from liturgy by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed / A Sanctified Art LLC / [sanctified art.org](http://sanctifiedart.org).

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