



Centenary

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

December 17, 2023

Third Sunday of Advent

As the Prelude begins, you are invited to enter a time of prayer and meditation as we prepare to worship God together.

Prelude

Savior of the Nations, Come

J. S. Bach

Choral Introit

Jubilate, Servite

Call to Worship

Leader: Have you noticed? Are you paying attention?
God is doing a new thing.

People: We watch and wait in the fierce joy of the coming Messiah.

Leader: You know the captives? God is bringing freedom.

You know the brokenhearted? God is bringing healing.

People: We watch and wait in the fierce joy of the coming Messiah.

Leader: Beloved, listen. God is calling *you*.

To be freed and to free your neighbors.

To be healed and to heal your community.

To testify to the Light among us.

People: We watch and wait in the fierce joy of the coming Messiah.

Leader: So, let us join our voices and our hearts

as we proclaim the story

of the one whose coming we anticipate

and yet is already as close as our own breath.

**People: We come to watch, to wait, and to worship
in the fierce joy of Jesus Christ, the coming Messiah.**

Amen.

Hymn No. 214

Savior of the Nations, Come

NUN KOMM, DER HEIDEN HEILAND

1. Savior of the nations, come; Virgin's son, here make thy home!
Marvel now, O heaven and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth.
2. Not by human flesh and blood; by the Spirit of our God
was the Word of God made flesh, woman's offspring, pure and fresh.
3. Wondrous birth! O wondrous child of the Virgin undefiled!
Human and divine in one, eager now his race to run!
4. God the Father is his source, back to God he runs his course;
Down to death and hell descends, God's high throne he reascends.
5. Now thy manger's halo bright hallows night with newborn light;
Let no night this light subdue, let our faith shire ever new.

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Opening Prayer

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Let us pray.

All: Holy God of Joy, we rejoice in the reality of who you are.

We live within the joy of your love for us.

Our contentment comes and goes.

Our happiness ebbs and flows.

**Our feelings depend upon our circumstances,
our physical health, our brain chemistry.
But our joy is deeply rooted in our identity
as your beloved children.
And we give you thanks. Amen.**

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Leader : We light this candle as a symbol of Christ our Joy.
May the joyful promise of your presence, O God,
make us rejoice in our hope of salvation.

All: **O come, O come, Emmanuel.**

Announcements

Children's Time

Prayer for Illumination

Old Testament Reading

[Isaiah 64:1-4, 8-11](#)

Psalter

Psalm 126

Ps. 30:5cd
French carol melody



For the night weep - ing may tar - ry;
with the morn - ing light comes joy.

Response

- 1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
- 2 **Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;**
then they said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”
- 3 **The Lord has done great things for us;
we are glad.**

Response

- 4 Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourse in the Negeb!
- 5 **May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy!**
- 6 Those who go forth weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
**shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.**

Response

Epistle Reading

[1 Thessalonians 5:6-24](#)

Hymn No. 206*I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light*

HOUSTON

1. I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus
God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus
2. I want to see the brightness of God. I want to look at Jesus.
Clear Sun of Righteousness, shine on my path, and show me the way to the Father.
3. I'm looking for the coming of Christ. I want to be with Jesus
When we have run with patience the race, we shall know the joy of Jesus

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Gospel Reading[John 1:6-8, 19-28](#)**Sermon***Joyful – Even When It Seems Out of Place*

Dr. Matt Bates

Offertory Prayer**Offertory Anthem***Rejoice in the Lord Always*

Anonymous

Prayers of the People

The Silent Prayer

The Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer No. 895

**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 trespasses,
as we forgive those that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen.**

The Hymn No. 209*Blessed Be the God of Israel*

MERLE'S TUNE

1. Blessed be the God of Israel, who comes to set us free,
who visits and redeems us, and grants us liberty.
The prophets spoke of mercy, of freedom and release;
God shall fulfill the promise to bring our people peace.
2. Now from the house of David a child of grace is given;
a Savior comes among us to raise us up to heaven.
Before him goes the herald, forerunner in the way,
the prophet of salvation, the harbinger of day.
3. On prisoners of darkness the sun begins to rise,
the dawning of forgiveness upon the sinner's eyes,
to guide the feet of pilgrims along the paths of peace;
O bless our God and Savior with songs that never cease!

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Benediction**Choral Response***Come, Rejoice in God*

The altar flowers this morning are given in memory of Ernest E. Kara by Heidi Kara.

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped us this morning and throughout the week to make this worship possible.

Welcome!

Centenary United Methodist Church is a Reconciling Congregation, extending hospitality and encouraging full participation of all, regardless of age, race, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, education, economic background, and physical or mental ability.

We are glad that you have joined us today! If you are a new guest, we hope that you experience a warm welcome! Please return soon and consider us for your church home. If you are interested in church membership, please speak with a pastor.

Announcements

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS – *LAST DAY TO ORDER!* It is Centenary's tradition at Christmas to express honor and remembrance by donating poinsettias. The plants will be in the sanctuary for Dec. 24 and 31. They will be available for pick up after worship on Dec. 31. Order forms are available at the back of the sanctuary and downstairs by the kitchen bulletin board. You may also order [online](#).

CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR MCGUIRE HOSPITAL. *Deadline to contribute cards is today.* We will once again send Christmas greetings to our military veterans at McGurie Hospital this year. There will be a box located at the entrance to the Sanctuary for your cards. Please address the envelopes with: To a Veteran, To a Hero, To a Brave Person, etc. Inside the card, please thank them for their service to our country, their devotion to freedom, their sacrifice, admiration for their service, etc. Please sign your card. Thank you for taking the time to acknowledge these women and men after all they have done in service to our country.

CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING – As our tradition, our Christmas Eve offering will go to United Methodist Family Services. UMFS is an unwavering champion for high-risk children and families in Virginia. UMFS serves children in foster care and children struggling with mental health and behavioral challenges. They provide foster care and adoption programs, specialized education schools, and mental health programs. Your support of UMFS through this offering will help high-risk children achieve a brighter future. Thank you for supporting this transformative ministry.

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY – We are taking a break over the holidays. We will be back on January 10 and look forward to seeing you then!

Upcoming Events

December 18	5:00 pm	Change the World/RVA
December 19	Noon	AA
December 20	7:00 pm	Choir Rehearsal
December 21	10:30 am	Friday Lunch Program
	Noon	AA
December 24	10:30 am	Family Christmas Eve Service
	8:30 pm	Traditional Christmas Eve Service