

Banning United Methodist Church

Third Sunday in Advent

December 17, 2023

† Congregation rises in body or spirit

Congregational response in bold

GATHERING MUSIC

CENTERING WORDS

Denise Cosgrove

God's faithful live as oaks of righteousness. Let us grow strong and true this Advent season.

PRELUDE

Cathy Mauge

WELCOMING FRIENDS and NEWCOMERS

WELCOME and PASSING OF THE PEACE

MINISTRY MOMENTS and ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Marvin & Alice Ann Daugherty

Joy Candle

Reader 1: When God's people were surrounded by hardship, suffering, and grief, Isaiah proclaimed, The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit (Isaiah 61:1-3a).

Reader 2: We come today as people who are also surrounded by suffering and grief. And yet, the Spirit hovers among us, tending and anointing, inspiring freedom where there is captivity, declaring blessing in places the world has cursed, and igniting fierce joy where mourning and heartache prevail.

Congregation: We wait as people who experience hardship and pain, yet we are called to witness to the persistent joy that sustains our life as God's people.

Reader 1: We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, just peace, and fierce joy. May our lives shine with the fierce, tenacious joy of the Light who lives in our hearts as we wait and work for the coming of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

†CALL TO WORSHIP

Denise Cosgrove

L: Love has come down to us this Advent Season.

P: Divine love which heals and transforms our lives.

L: With great joy, we receive that love and share it with others.

P: We open our hearts to all God's children, the last, the least, and the lost, as well as those who feel privileged.

L: The Lord has done and continues to do great things for us.

P: Praise be to God who loves us so much and who challenges us to be people of joy in this darkened world. AMEN.

†OPENING HYMN

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

UMH #196

OPENING PRAYER

Denise Cosgrove

Lord God, as we gather this day, we open our hearts to You, seeking Your healing and transforming love. Our world cries for justice for all people, yet the leaders seem intent on bantering with one another, unmindful of the peace-bringers and those who would heal and teach the ways of peace. Be with all of us. Prepare us for this *bright light* of love which You are sending to us, for we ask this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Denise Cosgrove

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 NRSV

¹The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; ²to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. ⁸For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

GOSPEL READING

Pastor Doug

John 1:6-8, 19-28 NRSV

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. ²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

SUNDAY ENSEMBLE

SERMON

"Embrace the Light"

Pastor Doug

PRAYERS OF THE PASTOR and PEOPLE

Children in Prayer

(After all slides: In Your mercy, **Lord, hear our prayer**)

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

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 trespasses as we forgive those who 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.

GIVING BACK TO GOD (TITHES AND GIFTS)

Denise Cosgrove

OFFERTORY

Cathy Mauge

†**DOXOLOGY**

“Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

†**PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Denise Cosgrove

As God has so richly poured gifts of love, peace, hope, and joy into our lives; let us receive the morning's offering as tokens of our gratitude for all these blessings. AMEN.

†**CLOSING HYMN**

“Hark! the Herald Angels Sing”

UMH #240

†**BENEDICTION**

Pastor Doug