

**Banning United Methodist Church**  
Fourth Sunday in Advent/Christmas Eve  
December 24, 2023

**GATHERING MUSIC**

**CENTERING WORDS**

Kathy Bainter

On this holy day, we meet a great mystery. In the quiet of a stable, we hear the cry of a newborn child.  
In the stillness of a field, we see the glory of God. Come and find the mystery of love.

**PRELUDE**

**WELCOMING FRIENDS and NEWCOMERS**

**WELCOME and PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Pastor Doug

**MINISTRY MOMENTS and ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Kathy Bainter

†**HYMN** "O Come, All Ye Faithful" vs. 1-3

UMH #234

1. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem. Come and behold him,  
born the King of angels;

Refrain:

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

2. True God of true God, Light from Light Eternal, lo, he shuns not the Virgin's womb; Son of the Father,  
begotten, not created;

Refrain:

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation; O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above! Glory to God, all glory in  
the highest;

Refrain:

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

**LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH**

Dan & Rev. Janice Mabey

**Reader 1:** When the angel Gabriel visited Mary, announcing God's plan for her to conceive and give birth to the Messiah, "Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'" (Luke 1:34) And yet, only a few months later, Mary sings to Elizabeth, My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name (Luke 1:46-49).

**Reader 2:** We, like Mary, hear God's call to be part of making God's dream for our salvation and flourishing a reality, and we question, "How can this be? I am only..." Yet, like Mary, the "onlys" that make us hesitate are gifts God can and will use as God's love transforms us into bearers of good news.

**Congregation: We wait as people who have encountered divine Love that disrupts the status quo and ushers us into abundant life marked by mutual love and peace that flows from the flourishing of all people.**

**Reader 1:** We light the candles on this wreath, and we illuminate the candles or flashlights in our homes, as signs of our shocking hope, our just peace, our fierce joy, and the love that transforms us. May Love grow within us, transforming us into bold witnesses of God's salvation with our voices and our lives. Amen.

†**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Kathy Bainter

L: It's Christmas Eve! How quickly this time has come upon us!

**P: We are breathless. Still so much to be done.**

L: Calm your spirits. Take time to hear the *wondrous news*.

**P: Open our ears to hear Mary's Story**

L: Believe in the *good news!*

**P: We believe and rejoice! God's love is here with us! AMEN.**

†HYMN "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

UMH #211

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

2. O come, thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh; to us the path of knowledge show and cause us in her ways to go.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

3. O come, O come, great Lord of might, who to thy tribes on Sinai's height in ancient times once gave the law in cloud and majesty and awe.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. Verse 3

4. O come, thou Root of Jesse's tree, an ensign of thy people be; before thee rulers silent fall; all peoples of thy mercy call.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

### OPENING PRAYER

Kathy Bainter

**Lord, remind us that, like Mary, each one of us is a bearer of your *Good News*. We are called to proclaim hope, peace, joy, and love in Your Name. Open our hearts and our spirits today to receive with great joy the love that You have for us. For we ask this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.**

### PSALM READING

Kathy Bainter

Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 NRSV

<sup>1</sup>I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. <sup>2</sup>I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. <sup>3</sup>You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David: <sup>4</sup>I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations." Selah

<sup>19</sup>Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said: "I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people. <sup>20</sup>I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him; <sup>21</sup>my hand shall always remain with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. <sup>22</sup>The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him. <sup>23</sup>I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. <sup>24</sup>My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him; and in my name his horn shall be exalted.

<sup>25</sup>I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. <sup>26</sup>He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!'

†HYMN "Joy to the World"

UMH #246

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

2. Joy to the world, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ; while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

4. He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness, and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

### GOSPEL READING

Pastor Doug

Luke 1:26-38 NRSV

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his

words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup>The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup>And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup>Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

†**HYMN** "Go, Tell It on the Mountain"

UMH #251

Refrain:

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere; go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.

1. While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night, behold throughout the heavens there shown a holy light.

Refrain:

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere; go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.

2. The shepherds feared and trembled, when lo! above the earth, rang out the angel chorus that hailed the Savior's birth.

Refrain:

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere; go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.

3. Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born, and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

Refrain:

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere; go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.

**SERMON** "Surprise"

Pastor Doug

†**HYMN** "Angels We Have Heard on High"

UMH #238

1. Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains, and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain:

Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong? What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heavenly song?

Refrain:

Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

3. Come to Bethlehem and see Christ whose birth the angels sing; come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

Refrain:

Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

4. See him in a manger laid, whom the choirs of angels praise; Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while our hearts in love we raise.

Refrain:

Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

**OFFERTORY**

†**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**

Kathy Bainter

**Gracious and Generous God: We offer our gifts to You, knowing that the energy exerted in our giving is tiny compared to what we've expended finding the gifts for our families and friends. You have given us a glimpse of the gift you truly seek in the angel's conversation with Mary: when told that she would give birth to our Savior, she simply said, "Yes, let it be according to Your word." May that affirmation of faith and obedience be the gift we offer this day. In Christ, we pray. Amen.**

**SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION**

**SERVICE OF WORD AND TABLE III**

Hymnal Page 15

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty (almighty God), creator of heaven and earth. You created light out of darkness and brought forth life on the earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets. In the fullness of time you gave your only Son Jesus Christ to be our Savior, and at his birth the angels sang glory to you in the highest and peace to your people on earth.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. As Mary and Joseph went from Galilee to Bethlehem and there found no room, so Jesus went from Galilee to Jerusalem and was despised and rejected. As in the poverty of a stable Jesus was born, so by the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

As your Word became flesh, born of woman, on that night long ago, so, on the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

**Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father (God ), now and for ever.

**Amen.**

### **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.

### **COMMUNION HYMN "Let us Break Bread Together"**

Hymn #618

1. Let us break bread together on our knees, (on our knees) let us break bread together on our knees. (on our knees) When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me. (on me)
2. Let us drink wine together on our knees, (on our knees) let us drink wine together on our knees. (on our knees) When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me. (on me)
3. Let us praise God together on our knees, (on our knees) let us praise God together on our knees. (on our knees) When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me. (on me)
4. Let us praise God together on our knees, (on our knees) let us praise God together on our knees, (on our knees) When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy if you please. (if you please)

### **†HYMN**

"Away in a Manger"

UMH #217

1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head. The stars in the sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.
2. The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes; I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.
3. Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay close by me forever, and love me, I pray; bless all the dear children in thy tender care, and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

### **† CANDLE LIGHTING and CLOSING CAROL**

"Silent Night, Holy Night"

Hymnal #239

1. Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright round yon virgin mother and child. Holy infant, so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.
2. Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight; glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing Alleluia! Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!
3. Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light; radiant beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

### **†BENEDICTION**

Pastor Doug

### **POSTLUDE**