 **Emporia Presbyterian Church**

4th Sunday of Advent

December 24, 2023

**Emporia Presbyterian Church extends an enthusiastic welcome** to all who join with us in worship and fellowship. We affirm that there can be no exclusion within the body of Christ. If you need any assistance or have a prayer request, please email the pastor at pastorphyl.epc@gmail.com.

***Our Faith Statement***

*Through the love and inspiration of Jesus Christ and each other, we reach out beyond ourselves to support others, continue to grow in faith, praise God, and celebrate His gifts.*

\* - You are invited to stand as you are comfortable **Bold** – Please read aloud

WELCOME

A NOTE ON GATHERING FOR WORSHIP:

A reminder that whether we worship in or away from physical sanctuary: wherever we are, we are in sacred space when we set this time apart to be intentional, be in God’s presence, and let our spirits connect with each other by the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ name.

REFLECTION

*How can we make room for others this season?*

*~ Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity, A Sanctified Art, adapted*

\*LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES & CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsive) \**adapted from A Sanctified Art*

How does a weary world practice love?

By sending cards and picking up the phone.

 By practicing empathy and assuming the best in others.

 By learning people’s stories and finding common ground.

 By advocating for justice and saving a place at the table.

 There are a million ways to practice love.

 Today, with hope, peace, and joy, we light the candle of love as a reminder and a charge.

 **With God’s help, may we bring love into a weary world.**

\*CALL TO CONFESSION *\*adapted from A Sanctified Art*

We all know that a small group of convicted people can change the world. That’s how it’s always been. People like Mary, Elizabeth, Zechariah, and John the Baptist. Yet, we rarely feel like we can be one of those people. We downplay our ability to make a difference. We choose pessimism over optimism. We sweep hope and peace and even joy under the rug for the sake of realism. We forget the words to Mary’s song. Fortunately, our God’s love is bigger than all our fears and -isms. So, let us go to God in prayer, speak the truth of our lives, and let that honesty change us.

\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Unison)  *\*adapted from A Sanctified Art*

 **Loving God – We should have learned our lesson by now, but here we are again, awash in doubt and paralyzed by opportunity. We turn our back on your call upon our lives. We turn our backs on our true nature as your children. We turn our backs on one another, ignoring neighbors who may only know your love and grace through our words and deeds. Forgive us, we pray. Carve out space in our hearts to love as you love. Teach to us to sing Mary’s song for all the world, to make room for one another, and to make room for you.**

 **Lord, hear our prayer in Jesus’ name, and hear our personal confessions, too, lifted now from the silence of our hearts …**

\*ASSURANCE OF *\*adapted from Sanctified Art*

Family of faith – No matter how many time we forget, we still belong to God. Hear that again.

No matter what, we belong to God. Repeat after me: I am God’s beloved.

 **I am God’s beloved.**

I am blessed and sent to serve.

 **I am blessed and sent to serve.**

Trust and believe the good news! We are loved.

 **We are claimed.**

And together we proclaim –

 **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Amen.**

\*SHARING OF THE PEACE

 The peace of Christ be with you.

 **And also with you.**

\*HYMN OF THE DAY *Canticle of the Turning* #100

*offered online by Toshi Takami & Takako Iyadomi*

SCRIPTURE READINGS

 Luke 1:44b-55

SERMON *Sing of Love*

LITANY FOR ADVENT AND THE LORD’S PRAYER *adapted from O Antiphons*

O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High, pervading and permeating all creation, you order all things with strength and gentleness: Come now and teach us the way of salvation.

 **Come, Lord Jesus.**

O Adonai, Ruler of the house of Israel, you appeared in the burning bush to Moses and gave him the law on Sinai: Come with outstretched arm to save us.

 **Come, Lord Jesus.**

O Root of Jesse, rising as a sign for all the peoples, before you earthly rulers will keep silent, and nations give you honor: Come quickly to deliver us.

 **Come, Lord Jesus.**

O Key of David, Scepter over the house of Israel, you open and no one can close, you close and no one can open: Come set free the prisoners who live in darkness and the shadow of death.

 **Come, Lord Jesus.**

O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, Sun of justice: Come, shine on those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death.

 **Come, Lord Jesus.**

O Ruler of the nations, Monarch for whom the people long, you are the Cornerstone uniting all humanity: Come, save us all, whom you formed out of clay.

 **Come, Lord Jesus.**

O Emmanuel, our Sovereign and Lawgiver, desire of the nations and Savior of all: Come and save us, O Lord our God.

 **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come, O Come, Blessed Savior. Hear us. Hear our prayers. Those we speak aloud, lifting up to you

**This week, we pray for**

Angie Price, Brian Alexander, Bryer Scales, Catherine McIntyre, Christine Klinger, Clara Caldwell,

Courtney Elbert, Dakota Aye, Dan Hostetter, Diane Lang, Diane Sillaman, Jim Edwards, LeAnna Meats,

Lindsay Smith, Nancy Robohn, Nathaniel Ciero, Rick Buck, Rick Edwards, Tim Webb, Wade Coester,

our neighbors in Israel & Palestine, our neighbors in Ukraine

our ecumenical family in Japan, North Korea, South Korea

and those we whisper in our hearts.

God of grace – Ever faithful to your promises, the earth rejoices in hope of our Savior’s coming and looks forward with longing to his return at the end of time. At this time, in this thin place, prepare our hearts to receive him when he comes, hear us as we continue to pray the prayer he taught us to pray, saying:

 **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 debts, as we forgive our debtors;**

 **and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

 **For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

CALL TO OFFERING*from 2 Timothy 1:6 - adapted from Rev. Marilyn McKelvey Tucker-Marek; Presbyterian Outlook*

The Apostle Paul reminded Timothy “to rekindle the gift of God that is with you.” Friends, we have received abundant gifts from our faithful God. Now, we are invited to place those same gifts back in God’s service.

You can pay your pledge or support special offerings by clicking GIVE on the church website, or you can mail your offering in to the church office.

With hearts attuned to God, let us return to our Lord, God’s tithes, our offerings, and our intentions to further Christ’s work in compassionate and creative ways.

\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION (Unison) *\*adapted from A Sanctified Art*

 **Gracious God – We believe your love is a sacred gift, and when love feels impossibly out of reach, we believe that part of being of your sacred community is leaning on one another. Help us to fill each other’s hearts with love. Help us share our love with neighbors who are unloved. Use our gifts and use our lives to spread your love throughout a weary world. Amen.**

\*CHARGE & BENEDICTION

^ from *How Does a Weary World Rejoice?,* Advent resources written by and adapted from prayers written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | *A Sanctified Art LLC* | sanctifiedart.org

**Scripture**

# Luke 1:44b-55

And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name; indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**THIS WEEK**

**2024 Volunteer Schedules (Liturgists, Van Drivers, Sunday Hosts) are available on the table in the back of**

**the sanctuary.** Because of time constraints, they will not be emailed this year.

**Today, Christmas Eve AM & PM Services –** This morning we conclude the Advent journey, then at 7:00pm

this evening, we celebrate the birth of Christ during our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of

Lessons and Carols.

**Also Today, the Christmas Joy Offering** - Contributions to this special offering will assist current and

 retired church workers and their families with critical financial needs, and provide scholarships to

 students attending Presbyterian related schools.

**Merry Christmas and a Very Happy New Year!** *The office will be closed through Monday, January 1st.*

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

**Monthly Mission** – For January we are collecting for Logan Avenue School: Pancake Mix (just add water), Peanut Butter & Jelly (please, no glass), Spaghetti, or Egg Noodles.

**Food For All –** Please donate food items at our West Campus in the Little Blessings Box located out by the street.

Be mindful of the temperatures as you choose non-perishable items.

**Sunday School Sign Up for Children’s classes that begin Jan 7th –** For those who have indicated they will participate in leading 2024 Sunday School Classes for our children, the sign up sheet is on the table in the back of the sanctuary. Thank you for volunteering!

**Year End Giving must be postmarked or in the church office by December 31st!** - A reminder the office is closed from the 25th through the end of the year for those that prefer to hand deliver as opposed to mailing. Ensure your year-end gifts meet the IRS and EPC fiscal year deadline!

**4th Wednesday Pot Luck** - is on break for December. But we will meet again Wednesday the 24th of January.

**Pastor Phyl will be away –** December 28th thru January 1, but emergency pastoral care is in place. If you have a pastoral care concern while Pastor Phyl is away, please contact the church office at 342-0375, and the office staff can direct you to the appropriate clergy or congregational care team member.