

*SERVICE OF WORD AND SACRAMENT*

*December 15 and December 16, 2023*



*"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight,'"*

*Mark 1:2-3*



*"John the Baptist" (1465), as it appears on the altar of Saint Catherine in the Church of Saints John and Martin, Schwabach, Germany.*

# Gathering as the Body of Christ

CENTERING SONG

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

UMH 207

GREETING

PRESIDER

\*CALL TO WORSHIP

STUDENT MINISTER

We gather in the presence of God to encounter Love that sets free.

**We do not come seeking crumbs of justice but a way of life that liberates.**

Together, we practice courage in resisting evil and rejecting the temptations of complicity and complacency.

**The Spirit leads us in power and truth.**

Our faith is placed in Love Eternal that lifts broken spirits and brings new life from places of ruin.

**With hope that is neither narrow nor fragile, we come to prepare for Christ's arrival.**

\*OPENING HYMN

WAITING FOR YOU (VERSES 1&2)

THE MANY

Verse 1

The earth cries out nothing feels right

The world cries out no justice in sight

Fires burning everywhere

Too many too hot too bright

Chorus 1

We are waiting for you, We are waiting for you

We are waiting for that

Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo,

Verse 2

The child cries out don't turn out the light

Broken hearts cry out no end of hurt in sight

Greed and guns rule everywhere

Too many too strong to fight

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## **\*CONFESSION & WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

[All are invited to turn toward the Baptismal Font.]

John the Baptist called people to repentance to prepare them for the coming of God's reign. Let us, too, as we look on the baptismal font and remember our own baptisms, repent, that we may be ready for God who comes to us.

**God, we confess that it is not easy to wait for you. We live in a world which worships power and which acts quickly through force; as individuals, we value expediency, ignoring its repercussions. How difficult it is for us to wait for the power of your rule which comes slowly through love. We turn to you in contrition, opening ourselves to the work of your Spirit. Forgive us, God. Come to us in your Christ, and reveal your reign on earth that we might work to bring it to fruition.**

(Silent Confession)

Friends, God is patient, God is just, God forgives our sins and cleanses us of all that is not right. God is with us in the waiting, in the hoping, and in the working toward the reign of God's Kingdom. **Hallelujah, and amen.**

## **\*SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

**STUDENT MINISTER**

You are invited to pass the peace to each other in a way comfortable to you and your neighbor. Be mindful that some of our siblings may prefer non-contact ways of passing the peace, so kindly ask before hugging or shaking hands.

Peace be with you!      **And also with you!**

Let us share this peace with one another.

## **A FAREWELL BLESSING FOR DEACONESS MYKA KENNEDY STEPHENS**

## Service of the Word

**POEM [SAT. ONLY]**

**UNTITLED**

**DOROTHEE SOELLE**

Prayer is an important part of preparation. As the author suggests, there are many ways to offer prayer.

And I saw a man on 126th Street  
broom in hand  
sweeping eight feet of the street  
Meticulously he removed garbage and dirt  
from a tiny area  
in the midst of a huge expanse  
of garbage and dirt

And I saw a man on 126th Street  
sorrow sat on his back  
sweeping eight feet of the street  
Wear and tear showed on his arms  
in a city  
where only crazy folk  
Find something to hope in

And I saw a man on 126th Street  
broom in hand  
There are many ways to offer prayer.  
With a broom in the hand  
is one I had hitherto  
not seen before

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**STUDENT MINISTER**

Gracious and loving God, we come seeking guidance, comfort, a taste of something greater and deeper than ourselves. As we hear the word, may it move us, may it fill us.  
**Amen.**

**SCRIPTURE READING**

**MARK 1:1-8**

**NRSV**

A reading from the Gospel of Mark, chapter 1, verses 1 through 8.

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight,’ ”so John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Holy wisdom, holy Word. **Thanks be to God!**

**SERMON**

**REV. DR. RIDDICK WEBER - DEC. 13**

**TOM RIM - DEC. 16**

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY**

**STUDENT MINISTER**

God of hope, who brought love into this world,

**Be the love that dwells between us.**

God of hope, who brought peace into this world,

**Be the peace that dwells between us.**

God of hope, who brought joy into this world,

**Be the joy that dwells between us.**

God of hope, the rock we stand upon,

**Be the center, the focus of our lives always, and especially during this season of Advent, Amen.**

## *Service of the Table*

**OFFERTORY SONG**

**INSTRUMENTAL**

**\*THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION**

Holy God, We give thanks for your creation, fragile, yet fruitful, enough for all. We give thanks that you call us into community where love and justice may flourish, enough for all. We give thanks that you invite us on this Advent journey. Awake, curious, longing to meet you, we set out for your table of grace.

You light our path one step at a time, beckoning us onto a Way that offers us new eyes to explore the vision of the Promised One; new senses to feel the heartbeat of the Vulnerable One new courage to share the urgency of the Ruler of Peace.

One more step, one more stretch, one more challenge takes us deeper into the mystery of your abundant life: a world healed, renewed; all nature, all people at peace. Along the Way, we join our voices with those of all created beings in Heaven, and on Earth:

**Holy, holy, God almighty  
You are wholly, Love and light  
Heaven and earth are flowing with your glory,  
Holy God of power and might.  
Sing Hosanna, in the highest  
Sing hosanna, we proclaim!  
Crying blessed be the faithful, who are coming in your name.**

We give you thanks for sending us Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-Us, whose life, death and resurrection have become for us the Way to find you, to know you, to join with you in creating your new heaven and new earth.

We remember the night when Jesus gathered at table with his friends in a time of struggle and fear, took bread, blessed it and gave it to them saying “Take and eat: for this is my body.”

And after supper, as Jesus looked forward to your desired day of joy and power, he took the cup of wine, again gave You thanks and praise and said, “Take this, all of you, and drink. This is the cup of the new covenant, my life poured out for you. I will drink this with you again in the reign of God. Share this bread and this cup in memory of me.”

Come now, Holy Spirit of God— As you were present at creation, be present now, and let these gifts of bread and cup become for us the bread of life and the cup of blessing.

As you were sent by Jesus to accompany us on our journey of faith, be present now, and transform this community, sharing this bread and cup, into one body in Christ.

Amen

#### **INVITATION TO THE TABLE**

**PRESIDER**

We have a few COVID related options for those who wish to partake. If you wish to receive from the ministers, take an empty cup from the stack on the aisle table and approach the minister, who will place a piece of bread in your open hand. All bread is gluten free. Or you may take one of the sealed celebration cups with the wafer on top and juice beneath; hold them out to the minister for a blessing. A minister will pour grape juice into your cup. Eat, drink, and dispose of the cup in the waste baskets at the side aisles as you return to your seat.

If you are unable to come forward, please signal the ministers and we will come to you at your seat. Those who prefer not to partake in Communion are invited to a different kind of divine encounter through an interfaith prayer of blessing. If this is your preference, we invite you to meet the minister at the baptismal font.

Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here at this table where Christ is the host.

**COMMUNION SONG**

**ALL EARTH IS WAITING**

**NCH 121 (v 1-3)**

## *Going Forth as the Body of Christ*

**\*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

**PRESIDER**

We give you thanks, Holy God, that through this meal we have been strengthened and nourished to not only watch and wait, but to follow in your footsteps and in so doing, being transformed into the image and likeness of Christ as we faithfully serve others in his name.

**This we do together as we look forward to the final feast where all will be gathered together at your table to share in life everlasting, Amen.m**

**\*CLOSING SONG**

**WAITING FOR YOU (BRIDGE & CHORUS)**

**THE MANY**

Bridge

Let us be a sign of hope  
Let us be your arms of love  
Let us be the ones that say  
There is another way

Chorus 3

We are waiting for you  
You are waiting for us too  
We are waiting for that  
Gloria in excelsis Deo (3X)

Ending

We are waiting for you  
You are waiting for us too

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**\*BENEDICTION**

**SENDING & POSTLUDE**

**ALL EARTH IS WAITING**

**INSTRUMENTAL**

*A voice cries out in the wilderness to prepare  
For the greatness it knows will soon arrive  
Go, and make ready for joy is coming anew*

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**The poinsettias adorning Santee Chapel are gifts given to memorialize or honor the beloved individuals who are named below:**

**Given in Memory**

The Rev'ds Katherine Hancock Ragsdale and Margaret Ewing Lloyd honor the memory of Amber Coleman Ragsdale, Joseph Neff Ewing, Julian Hardaway Ragsdale, and Robert Talbot Jo-Anne and Melinda Ludy honor the memory of John and Dorothy Spriggs, and Cyrus and Rubye Ludy

Adam Perry honors the memory of Keith Perry

Allison Berger honors the memory of Gerald Irving

Rev. Dr. Catherine E. Williams honors the memory of Harran Jesse Williams, beloved son

Rev. Dr. Catherine E. Williams honors the memory of Ted Ryan, beloved brother

Rev. Dr. Diane Bogues honors the memory of Ms. Elisheba Bogues (mother) and Mr. Chelsey Bogues (father)

Dean Molitoris honors the memory of Augustine Apprey

Rev. Dr. Melvin Baber honors the memory of Mr. Robert L. Baber, Sr., and Mrs. Eula M. Baber

**Given to Honor**

Rev. Dr. Catherine E. Williams honors the phenomenal Chapel Team of 2023-24

Dr. Anne T. Thayer honors her LTS and MTS colleagues

Dr. Greg Carey honors Professors Julia O'Brien and Anne Thayer

Meg Graham honors Professors Anne Thayer and Julia O'Brien



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**Cover Art:** "John the Baptist," from *Art in the Christian Tradition*, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.  
<https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=56284>.

**Call to Worship:** Adapted from <https://enfleshed.com/liturgy/ordinaryworshipsettings/>

**Words of Assurance:** United Church of Christ, Book of Worship: United Church of Christ (Cleveland: United Church of Christ, Local Church Ministries, 2012). Amended by the LTS worship team.

**Poem:** Soelle, Dorothee. Untitled work from the collection *Dorothee Soelle: Essential Writings*. Selected and intro by Dianne L. Oliver. New York: Orbis Books, 2006.

**Communion Liturgy:** Rev. Susan A. Blain, Minister for Worship and Gospel Arts. Communion Prayer for Advent Year A December, 2019 <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/advent-communion-service-year-a-december-2019/>

***\*The worship planning team creates all other parts of the liturgy except where noted.***

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**LANCASTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY WORSHIP TEAM**

*Equilla Curry, Chynaah Maryoung-Cooke '21, Patricia Hall, Jack Kasander, Cam Richesson '23, Deklan Rupp, Rev. Dr. Kellie Turner '18., and DV Yost.*

*Rev. Dr. Catherine E. Williams, Advisor*

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**THE WORSHIP TEAM SEEKS:**

*To serve the universal church of our Creator.*

*To minister to the unique and diverse needs of the seminary community.*

*To foster an expansive culture of worship that values difference and challenges the normative.*