



# Johnsville United Methodist Church

Union Bridge, MD

Our mission is to nurture the members of the congregation in developing a personal relationship with God and to share His word and His love with the larger community.

PRAISE, WORSHIP AND CELEBRATION

December 6, 2020

## PRELUDE

“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent”

## WELCOME

### \*Opening Hymn

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

UMH 211

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lowly 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.

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

*Refrain*

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

5. O come, thou Key of David, come,  
and open wide our heavenly home.  
The captives from their prison free,  
and conquer death's deep misery.

*Refrain*

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

6. O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by thy justice here;  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

*Refrain*

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

7. O come, Desire of nations bind  
all peoples in one heart and mind.  
From dust thou brought us forth to life;  
deliver us from earthly strife.

*Refrain*

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

\*Call to Worship: (Isaiah 40, Psalm 85, Peter 3)

Leader: Lift up your voice. Lift it up, do not fear.

**People: Feeding, gathering, carrying, leading: This is how God will come.**

Leader: The old will pass away. A new world will dawn.

**People: Love, faithfulness, righteousness, peace: These will mark God's new day.**

Leader: Love needs a path. Peace needs a highway.

**People: Even as we wait, let us make a way for God: In our hearts and in our world.**

Leader: Let us worship God.

\*OPENING PRAYER (Psalm 85, 2 Peter 3)

**God, we are confident you are coming, bringing a world where all will be made right. Calm our anxiety, strengthen our patience, and keep our hope aflame, as we work towards, and wait for, your new day. Amen.**

Lighting of the Advent Candle

**People: Lord God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things, we are waiting and longing for the day when steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; when justice and peace will kiss each other; We know that with you one day is like a thousand years and that your patience is our salvation: come suddenly; show us the mercy promised to our ancestors. At your coming, let us be found by you at peace. In Jesus' name. Amen.**

*(Based on Psalm 85:10; Malachi 3:1; Luke 1:72; 2Peter 3:8, 14)*

Leader: On the second Sunday of Advent, we light two candles to show that the church joyfully awaits the coming of its Savior, who enlightens our hearts and scatters the shadows of fear and doubt. We pray that God will bless our lighting of these candles so that we reflect the splendor of Christ, our Light

Special Music

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

Henchman Quartet

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

**We pray that someday an arrow will be broken, not in something or someone, but by each of humankind, in indicate peace, not violence. Someday, oneness with creation, rather than domination over creation, will be the goal to be respected. Someday fearlessness to love and make a difference will be experience by all people. Then the eagle will carry our prayer for peace and love, and the people of the red, white, yellow, brown and black communities can sit in the same circle together to communicate in love and experience the presence of the Great Mystery in their midst. Someday can be today for you and me. Amen. (Wanda Lawrence,)**

through your son Jesus who taught his disciples to pray by saying these words..

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.

\*Hymn

“Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”

UMH 216

1. Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming  
from tender stem hath sprung!  
Of Jesse's lineage coming,  
as those of old have sung.  
It came a floweret bright,  
amid the cold of winter,  
when half spent was the night.

2. Isaiah 'twas foretold it,  
The Rose I have in mind;  
with Mary we behold it,  
The Virgin Mother kind.  
To show God's love aright,  
she bore to us a Savior,  
When half spent was the night.

3. O Flower, whose fragrance tender  
with sweetness fills the air,  
dispel in glorious splendor  
the darkness everywhere.  
True man yet very God,  
from sin and death now save us,  
and share our every load.

Scripture Readings

Hebrew Scripture Lesson: Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. <sup>2</sup>Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

3 A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. <sup>5</sup>Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." <sup>6</sup>A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. <sup>7</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. <sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

9 Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" <sup>10</sup>See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. <sup>11</sup>He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;

<sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight,”

<sup>4</sup>John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>He proclaimed, ‘The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. <sup>8</sup>I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’

Response to Scriptures:

Leader: This is the word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God!**

Sermon

“Our Hymn: O Come Ye Faithful”

Rev. Shari McCourt

The season of Advent is a time of preparation. We are preparing for Christ to come again as mysteriously as Christ came the first time in the tiny infant child. So inquiring minds want to know why God sent God’s only son. Why did God pick the time, place and people to send Jesus?

Our Epistle lesson today said, “Galatians 4:4-8a. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.” In God’s time, God sent Jesus. During that time 3 to 5% of the population were in haves category and 95 to 97% were in the have-not category. As much as we are not happy with the world today, there are many more haves now than at the time Jesus came. When we try to think as God thinks, which is difficult, we might imagine God’s disappointment for the world and creation that God not living as God had intended at all. Humanity was wiping itself out! Destruction, injustice, oppression, abject poverty that we can’t even imagine, the list goes on and on...God had to do something.

Our God came in the person of Jesus, fully human and fully divine to save us from ourselves. It was a time for salvation...it is a time for salvation. God sent prophets to share the good news that a son would be born to us to show us the way. It took many prophets and many years for humanity to be open to the hope of the world to come to us. Even to this day, we still struggle with Him.

Individually, many people expressed no need for salvation. They were fine as they were. Life was good to them until something happened to rock their boat, and like us today that is when the cry for a savior is heard. Galatians continues, “God sent Jesus to come as our brother so that we might be adopted into God’s family. <sup>6</sup>And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God. I often wonder when we pray through our communion liturgy on the bottom of page 13 in our hymnal, which says, “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.” Do we truly understand that this is referring to God sending God’s son to free us from the path we ourselves have forged to the hope of new life through the love of God coming down to us through Jesus? Our adoption by God through Jesus is truly a freedom and liberation that we will never be able to justify—we are justified by God through Jesus adoption and price paid for our sake and salvation. We have been set free from captivity of our soul by the grace of God.

We need connection with our Creator, Loving Parent God. Our disconnectedness causes us to feel: fear, worry, anxiety, confusion, depression, conflict, discouragement and emptiness. These emotions then built a wall of guilt, shame, resentment and regret. When we are feeling these feelings, many scriptures remind us that these are symptoms of disconnectedness from God. It is not God who moved from us. God is steadfast. God keeps God’s promises. This disconnectedness on a larger scale has led to the many social ills that face us and our brothers and sister worldwide. We are indeed still in need of salvation. This is a season of celebrating and reconnecting with our liberator, our Messiah!

One of my favorite seminary professors, Laurence Hull Stookey, in his book “Calendar: Christ’s Time for the Church,” describes this time of year as the great exchange. Although we are busy exchanging gifts, and pleasantries of the season, this spiritual season is about the “exchange of divinity and humanity, of eternity and temporality, of life and death.” (Pp.105) Our divine God putting on flesh and came in the tiny infant child who took on the social ills of every kind and all sin of the world for those who came before us---For us now--- And those who will come after us.

Our hymn this morning is, “O Come, All Ye Faithful.” For over two hundred years this hymn has been sung in churches all over the world of all different denominations. There is much dispute as to the author of this beautiful Christmas carol. For a long time, it was thought to have been written by an unknown monk/cleric during the Middle Ages. Many others claimed to have penned this hymn.

In the book, *Stories Behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas*, by Ace Collins, he gives the most complete history that I have found so far. Collins describes John Francis Wade, who was born in 1711 in England, as, “...a man of God caught in the middle of a Holy War. In 1745, at age thirty-five, Wade’s life was on the line. Strife between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church was at an all-time high. Many practicing Catholics were forced to take their faith underground. To avoid prison or death, many priests fled Britain, including John Wade.” Wade traveled to France. He was given the job of researching historical church music before it was lost forever, and record it by pen. He was a calligrapher as well as a trained church musician who took his position and calling very seriously. Wade shared the historic hymns to Catholic churches all over Europe. He was responsible bringing the historic hymns back into popularity and use. Wade also wrote his own hymns, and had them published. “Adeste Fideles”, the original name of “O Come All Ye Faithful was published several times with John F. Wade credited as the author.

Almost one hundred years later, Frederrick Oakeley translated the hymn into English and signed his name to it. Prior to 1900 the American churches had utilized the hymn in their hymnals for worship services. It became a favorite song to sing, as Christmas caroling became a means to sharing the gospel message with the everyday average people from house to house. The radio played an important role in introducing it to the masses. The hymn has been sung by the most famous people, making the top ten list of our country for decades, and decades after that. Bing Crosby sang it on his album, “White Christmas,” excelling its popularity even more.

After WWII, as man named Maurice Frost was searching for the history and legends of some of the most famous hymns when he found enough evidence to prove that most-likely it was John F. Wade that penned this very famous and theologically inspiring hymn. Collins shared about John Wade, “Even though he was living in a time of great conflict between various branches of the Christian church, forced to give up the country he loved as a sacrifice of faith, and made to work long hours trying to preserve church records that others were attempting to erase for all time, Wade fully reveled in his role as a servant of his Lord. In every word and verse of “O Come, All Ye Faithful,” the composer’s faith is not just verified, it is magnified. At a time when the church was literally at war, only someone who truly believed in the holiness of Christ could have written a carol that would bring all Christians together to the same place each Christmas—bowing before Christ the Lord!” O come, all ye faithful and let us pray for our world to come to know Him and live by His teachings. Amen.

OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS TO GOD

OFFERTORY

**Many thanks for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of the church.**

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**As an act of worship, please consider keeping current in your tithes and offerings. Even though the church building is closed, we still have financial obligations we need to meet. The mailbox will be checked daily. The address is: Johnsville United Methodist Church, 11106 Green Valley Road, Union Bridge, MD 21791**

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\* DOXOLOGY                      “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”                      UMH 94

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below:  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Praise God, the source of all our gifts!  
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!  
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit!  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**Offering Prayer**

O God, who restores and makes new, let these gifts prepare the way; for good news proclaimed, for people comforted, and for the earth tended. Through our giving, may all partake of an abundant yield of peace. We believe it will be so. Amen.

\* CELEBRATION SONG                      “Angels from the Realms of Glory”                      UMH 220

1. Angels from the realms of glory,  
wing your flight o’er all the earth;  
ye who sang creation’s story  
now proclaim Messiah’s birth:

*Refrain*

Come and worship, come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn King.

2. Shepherds, in the field abiding,  
watching o’er your flocks by night,  
God with us is now residing,  
yonder shines the infant light:

*Refrain*

Come and worship, come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn King.

3. Sages, leave your contemplations,  
brighter visions beam afar;  
seek the great Desire of nations;  
ye have seen his natal star:

*Refrain*

Come and worship, come and worship,  
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

4. Saints, before the altar bending,  
watching long in hope and fear;  
suddenly the Lord, descending,  
in his temple shall appear:

*Refrain*

Come and worship, come and worship,  
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

\* BENEDICTION

Let us go forth a forgiven, forgiving people who make who live in such a way that our very lives are a testimony that all things are possible through Him! In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

POSTLUDE                      “Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates”