

The Fourth Week of Advent

Wednesday, December 22, 2010

“As we make our weary way
we know not where,
just when the night becomes its darkest
and we cannot see our path,
just then
is when the angels rush in,
their hands full of stars.”

—Ann Weems, *Kneeling in Bethlehem*

Gathering

Call to Worship (from Isaiah 9) (unison)

**The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
on those who lived in a land of deep shadow a light has shone.
For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders,
thou hast broken in pieces, O God, our Renewer.**

Opening Prayer

Song

“O Come,
O Come,
Emmanuel”



1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som
2. O come, Thou Day - spring, come and cheer Our spir - its
3. O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind All peo - ples



cap - tive Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile
by Thine ad - vent here; Dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of
in one heart and mind; Bid en - vy, strife, and dis - cord



here Un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
night, And death's dark shad - ows put to flight. Re-joyce! Re-joyce!
cease; Fill the whole world with heav - en's peace.



Em - man - u - el Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

Words of Welcome

Psalter

Psalm 22 (responsively)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

**O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.**

In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.
It was you who took me from this womb. You who kept me safe
on my mother's breast. Since my mother bore me, you have been my God.

**God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted.
God does not hide from me. When I cry to God, God hears me.
Thanks be to God!**

Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

**God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted.
God does not hide from me. When I cry to God, God hears me.
Thanks be to God!**

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 35

(page 623, O.T.)

Meditation

by Sarah A. Johnson

Song

"The Desert Shall Rejoice"



The des - ert shall re - joice And blos - som as a rose:

1. It shall
2. For the
3. For the
4. For the
5. As the
6. Un - to



blos - som a - bun - dant - ly And re - joice with praise and sing - ing.
ears of the deaf shall hear And the blind, their eyes be o - pened.
tongue of the mute shall sing And the lame will dance with glad - ness.
ground will be - come a pool And the dry land springs of wa - ter.
ran - somed re - turn to God And come sing - ing back to Zi - on.
Zi - on we come with joy, For our God has come to save us.

A Liturgy of Remembering *(using the Advent wreath candles)*

Leader: The first candle we light is to remember those whom we have loved and lost.
We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice, the memory that binds them to us in this season.

(Pause while the first candle is lit)

People: **May God's eternal love surround them.**

Leader: The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss, the loss of a relationship that was very important to us, part of our lives, our vocation, part of our own selves.
We pause to gather up the pain of the past and offer it to God, asking that from God's hands we receive the gift of peace.

(Pause while the second candle is lit)

People: **Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.**

Leader: The third candle we light is to remember ourselves this Christmas time.
We pause and remember these past weeks and months, the disbelief, the anger, the down times, the poignancy of reminiscing, the hugs and handshakes of family and friends, all those who stand with us.
We give thanks for all the support we have known.

(Pause while the third candle is lit)

People: **Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness; life overcomes death.**

Leader: The fourth candle is lit to remember our faith and the gift of hope that the Christmas story offers to us.
We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

(Pause while the fourth candle is lit)

People: **Let us remember the One who shows the way, who brings the truth, and who bears the light.**

(We leave the Christ candle unlit as a sign of waiting for a future that is yet unknown to us, from which God beckons us.)

Moment of Silent Reflection and Prayer

Pastoral Prayer

Song

"Silent Night, Holy Night"



1. Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm, all is bright, Round you
2. Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep-herds quake at the sight, Glo - ries
3. Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God, love's pure light Ra - diant
4. Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Won-drous star, lend thy light; With the



vir - gin moth-er and child! Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and mild,
stream from heav-en a - far, Heav-en-ly hosts sing: "Al - le - lu - ia;
beams from Thy ho-ly face, With the dawn of re - deem - ing grace,
an - gels let us sing, Al - le - lu - ia to our King;



Sleep in heav-en-ly peace, Sleep in heav-en-ly peace.
Christ the Sav - ior is born, Christ the Sav - ior is born."
Je - sus, Lord, at Thy birth, Je - sus, Lord, at Thy birth.
Christ the Sav - ior is born, Christ the Sav - ior is born.

Blessing

Feelings of grief over losses can be heightened at this time of year. Expectations for the holidays can be different from the realities. Such experiences need not be dealt with alone. Fourth Church's Lorene Replogle Counseling Center offers various resources and a supportive environment for reflecting on, exploring, and coping with such experiences. To learn how the Counseling Center can help, call the Center at 312.787.8425.

"How to Do Good Grief" will be the topic of this year's fifteenth annual Midwinter Conference hosted by the Lorene Replogle Counseling Center. The symposium, which will be held Saturday, February 5 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., will provide strategies and resources to grieve well and stay healthy after a loss. Loss can take many forms, and the experience of it is a natural part of life. Thus how we deal with it and how we grieve plays a role in our growth as human beings. Various speakers and multimedia presentations will address the idea of grieving well.

For more information or to register for the conference, contact the Counseling Center at 312.787.8425.

Grief support groups are offered throughout the year by the Counseling Center and are designed to enable those undergoing significant loss and leave-taking experiences to help one another deal with grief. John Boyle and other members of the Counseling Center staff lead the groups, for which there is no fee. Intercessory prayer provides opportunity to pray with a Deacon following the 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. Sunday services. This time of prayer takes place in Stone Chapel. Prayer concerns can also be written on prayer cards available outside Stone Chapel, in the Narthex, and in Anderson Hall and left for a Deacon to pray.

A New Year's Eve Service in the style of Taizé will be held on Friday, December 31 at 7:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. This service of meditative song, prayer, and a period of silence offers time for reflection as one year draws to a close and a new year begins.

The Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago

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Tonight's service is led by Sarah A. Johnson, Minister for Congregational Care and Carol Carpenter, Song Leader.