



Third Sunday of Advent
Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ
December 15, 2024

Whose laughter invites us, whose earth upholds us,
whose stars we wish upon,
whose symphony for birdsong awakens, oh awakens, us,
candle to a blinding sun.

from "By a Mighty and Shining Grace"
by Joseph H. Gilmore

Welcome

Ring of the Bell

Prelude "Joy" taken from Symphony No. 9 by Ludwig van Beethoven
Arranged by Jim Brickman

Call to Worship & Lighting of the Candle by The MacGowan Family

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent. In a moment, we will light the third candle on our Advent wreath: the candle of Joy.

In the time before the birth of Jesus, the Israelites had little peace or hope or joy for the future of their nation or their people, except for the power of God that remained strong in their lives, even as they wavered from time-to-time. Still, they persevered and waited for the "One who would answer their cries of "Hosanna!": a messiah, an anointed leader, like David who would help them. They believed when that happened, all would be well – again.

Today we continue our 2024 Advent journey, anticipating the birth of Jesus, the one who is called the Light of the World and whose Peace exceeds all earthly understanding...

As we light this candle of Joy, we give thanks for all those who fill us with joy – in our lives today or the memories we cherish. Joy – is here.

(The candles are lit...)

Please rise if you wish and join us in singing

"One Candle is Lit" Verse 1 for Hope; Verse 2 for Peace; Verse 3 for Joy

Come surely, Sweet Jesus, as dawn follows night,
Our hearts long to greet you, as roses the light.
Salvation, draw near us, our visions engage.
One candle is lit for the hope of the day.

Come quickly, shalom, teach us how to prepare
for a gift that compels us with justice to care.
Our spirits are restless till sin and war cease.
One candle is lit for the reign of God's peace.

Come festively sing while awaiting the birth,
join angels in dancing from heaven to earth.
Wave banners of good news, lift high thankful praise
One candle is lit for the joy of these days.

Please be seated

A Voice Responds

These fires atop towers of wax, symbolize the ever-present Light of the World, the One we await, born to us long ago, in a manger far away and (now) as close as the hearts here and afar that beat together, within us all.

Please remain as you are and join us in singing

Hymn "Joys Are Flowing Like a River" New Century Hymnal #284 v. 1,2, 3

Joys are flowing like a river, since the Comforter has come;
Christ abides with us forever, makes the trusting heart a home.
Blessed quietness, holy quietness, what assurance in my soul.
On the stormy sea, Jesus speaks to me, and the billows cease to roll.

Bringing life and health and gladness all around, this heavenly Guest
Banished unbelief and sadness, changed our weariness to rest.
Blessed quietness, holy quietness, what assurance in my soul.
On the stormy sea, Jesus speaks to me, and the billows cease to roll.

Like the rain that falls from heaven, like the sunlight from the sky,
So the Spirit too is given, coming on us from on high.
Blessed quietness, holy quietness, what assurance in my soul.
On the stormy sea, Jesus speaks to me, and the billows cease to roll.

Please rise, if you wish, and join in praying our Unison Prayer

Unison Prayer

Merciful God, we gather with hearts full of joy and hope, looking forward to the fulfillment of your promises. Just as you called your people through the prophet Zephaniah, we rejoice in the assurance of your presence among us.

As we listen to the call of John the Baptist, guide us in true repentance and righteous living. May we produce fruits worthy of Your kingdom, sharing with those in need, acting with honesty and integrity, and preparing our hearts for the coming of our Savior.

*Holy One, in this season of Advent, we look forward with anticipation and readiness. Fill us with your Spirit, that our love may expand with wisdom and deep insight. Grant us the courage to live out our faith boldly, reflecting your light in our lives and community.
In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, we pray. Amen.*

Assurance of God's Love and Pastoral Prayer

Please rise if you wish and join us in passing the Peace of Christ

Passing of the Peace

Filled with this joy of togetherness, we share the Peace of Jesus Christ; may it find its way into the hearts of all around the world... Friends, with this in our hearts...

May the Peace of the Risen Christ be with you!

And also with you!

Let us offer one another a sign of peace!

Chancel Choir "Promises" and "No Room for Mary" from *Emmanuel*
by Dorothy Davidson Hauscke

Please be seated

Joys, Celebrations and Concerns

Friends, we now invite you to share your Joys, Celebrations and Concerns. Please wait for the microphone and respond with:

"God, hear our prayers."

The Prayer of Jesus – "The Lord's Prayer"

Creator God who is in heaven
Hallowed* be your name.
Your kingdom come, your 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 yours is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymn "Dance into Joy" #205 Sing! Prayer and Praise

*Refrain: So dance into joy with hands upraised.
Greet each new day as the holiest of days;
and to your God sing great songs of praise!
To your God sing praise!*

Share from your path, some strand of light.
Bring all the shades, both dark and light.
Weaving together makes us all one.
Stories of Hope have just begun. *(Refrain)*

Reds from your passion and from your fear.
Rainbows shine through every tear.
Tender green shoots that bloom every Spring,
growing in love with each song we sing. *(Refrain)*

Through the deep blues, now are revealed
old hidden wounds soon to be healed.
On bold purples of dawn serene,
float the mysteries yet unseen. *(Refrain)*

Weave now each one this web of light
surrounding our world, both day and night,
with healing love and inner peace.
Joining together, joy will increase. *(Refrain)*

Frist Reading, Hebrew Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-20 (TIB)

*Shout for joy, fair Zion; shout, Israel, be glad!
Rejoice with all your heart, fair Jerusalem!
YHWH has averted your punishment and swept away your foes.
Israel, YHWH is among you as a ruler;
never again need you fear disaster.*

*On that day this must be the message to Jerusalem:
fear not, Zion, let not your hands hang limp in despair,
for YHWH your God is in your midst, a warrior to keep you safe;
who will rejoice over you and be glad of it;
who will show you love once more, and exult with songs of joy,
and soothe those who are grieving.*

At the appointed time I will take away your cries of woe.

Gospel Reading: Luke 3:7-18 (TIB)

John said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, "You pack of snakes! Who warned you to escape the wrath to come? Produce good fruit as a sign of your repentance. And don't presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Sarah and Abraham as our mother and father,' for I will tell you that God can raise children for Sarah and Abraham from these very stones. The axe is already laid at the root of the tree: every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and tossed into the fire."

When the people asked him, "What shall we do?" John replied, "Let the one with two coats share with the one who has none. Let those with food do the same."

Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to John, "Teacher, what are we to do?" John answered them, "Exact nothing over and above your fixed amount."

Soldiers likewise asked, "What about us?" John told them, "Don't bully anyone. Don't accuse anyone falsely. Be content with your pay."

The people were full of anticipation, wondering in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. John answered them all by saying, "I baptize you in water, but someone is coming who is mightier than I, who sandals I am not fit to untie! This One will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire. A winnowing fan is in his hand to clear the threshing floor and gather the wheat into the granary, but the chaff will be burnt in unquenchable fire."

Using exhortations like this, John proclaimed the Good News to the people. But Herod the tetrarch – whom John rebuked for his wickedness, including his relationship with his sister-in-law, Herodias – committed another crime by throwing John into prison.

Invitation to Give

We welcome your offerings at this time and invite you to place your prayer and information cards in the plate as we sing our Church Covenant.

Church Covenant

In response to God's love,
we covenant with each other...
to be faithful to the demands
and inspiration of the eternal spirit,
revealed in the event of Jesus Christ;
to accept and respect each other
with love and concern
in our worship and witness;
to reach out with the courage
of our convictions
in the cause of justice,
liberation, and equality for all.
In this, we covenant to keep the
ultimate promise: "I care, I am with you."

Benediction

Rev. Rebecca West

Advent invites each of us into a new way of living
in a world to which the kin-dom of God has come and is yet coming.

Go, now, blessed with the gift of togetherness,
for it is only in being truly present with God and one another
that we live as followers of the coming Messiah.
Amen.

Choral Blessing

"A Closing Prayer"

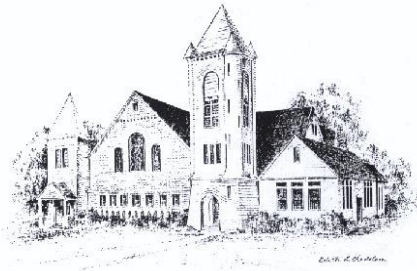
Words and Music by Don Besig

Ringling of the Bell

Postlude

"Joy to the World" Traditional

Lyrics by Isaac Watts, Arranged by Jim Brickman



Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ

For more than a century and a half, Sayville Congregational Church has served families on the South Shore of Long Island and has been a voice for the progressive Protestant tradition. A member of the United Church of Christ since it was established in 1957, today we continue to celebrate God's love, to advocate and act for the oppressed, and to welcome all those on their spiritual journey, from wherever they may come. Thank you for joining us. Please contact us at any time for more information about our congregation or with any questions you may have for us.

Thank you!

Rev. Becky West, Guest Preacher

Sean Cameron, Music Director

Liturgist – Mike Jayne

Ushers – Linda Brookshire, Lorraine Martin, Debbie Langstaff, Kris Minschke

Media Team – Karin Conrad, Mark Conrad, Casey Cunningham,
Connie Kauffman, Kathy Leis and Hank Maust

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Heather Corcoran, Church Administrator

Gail Kieser, eChimes Editor

Today's Service is being simulcast on our church channel at
www.echimestv.org Tune in any time!

Peace. Shalom. Salaam. For the ways of peace are many.
"Namaste"