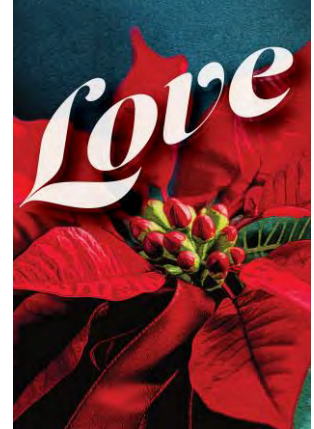


**Macon United Methodist Church**  
**190 W Bell Street, Macon, IL 62544; (217) 764-5133**  
**Pastor Terry McDorman; 630-390-0414; accesstogodshouse@gmail.com**  
**December 15, 2024** **Third Sunday of Advent Sunday**

**THOUGHT FOR THE DAY**

*“Any doubt of the Father’s love disappeared the night God was wrapped in barnyard towels so the hay wouldn’t scratch his back” Max Lucado*



**RINGING OF THE CHURCH BELL**  
**announcing the Advent Season**

**PRELUDE**

**GATHERING**      **Words of welcome and announcements**

**\*SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

*The coming of Christ turns the world upside down. For folks who are quite content with things as they are, this may not feel like good news! But a greater vision lies and as a sign of the love of Jesus as well.*

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP (responsive)**

**L:** Today there is good news for us to behold!

**P:** Those who feared that they were worth little to God have found blessing in God’s sight.

**L:** For in the mercy and love of God, the blind shall see, the lame shall walk without pain, those who could not hear shall be blessed with hearing, and there shall be peace.

**P:** God’s mercy and love is poured out for our parched souls.

**L:** Behold! The Lord’s compassion is with God’s people.

**P:** Believe in the power of God in all things. Amen.

**LIGHTING OF THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE—Love**

**Brad and Denise Hunt**

**Reader 1:**

Blessing upon blessing has been showered upon us by God.

**Reader 2:**

The lame shall walk; the blind shall see; the deaf shall hear.

**Reader 1:**

There will be peace and hope in God’s land.

**Reader 2:**

Be of good courage. Behold! God is blessing and redeeming us!

Today we light three candles. The first is the candle of Hope, reminding us to watch and wait for what God is about to do. [*Light the first candle*]

The second candle is the candle of Peace, enabling us to look at our lives, to get rid of all those things that keep us from God, to change our ways and live as God would have us live. [*The second candle is lit*]

The third candle is the candle of Love, through which we behold the mercy of God and believe in God's presence with us. [*The third candle is lit*]

**Reader 1:**

Come, see the lights. Let their brightness fill you.

**Reader 2:**

Come, feel the warmth of the lights. Let them give you comfort.

**Reader 1:**

Come, draw near to the lights, for God is breaking through to you.

**Reader 2:**

Come, rejoice in the lights, God is with us!

**\*OPENING HYMN**

***“Good Christian Men Rejoice”***

**(UMH # 224)**

**OPENING PRAYER (unison)**

**O God, we come today echoing John the Baptist's question to your Beloved Child: "Are you the one who is to come?" Give us eyes to see and ears to hear the answer for ourselves: In the work of justice: Christ! In the practice of mercy: Christ! In good news for the poor: Christ! In the vision of peace: Christ! Make us ready, with open hearts and loving spirits, to follow in Christ's Way. Amen.**

**COMMUNITY PRAYERS**

Let us lift our prayers in thoughts of praise.

**SILENT PRAYER**

Let us share our doubts with God.

**THE LORD'S PRAYER (all)**

**FIRST SCRIPTURE READING**

**Philippians 4:4-7(CEB)**

Be glad in the Lord always! Again I say, be glad! Let your gentleness show in your treatment of all people. The Lord is near, don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.



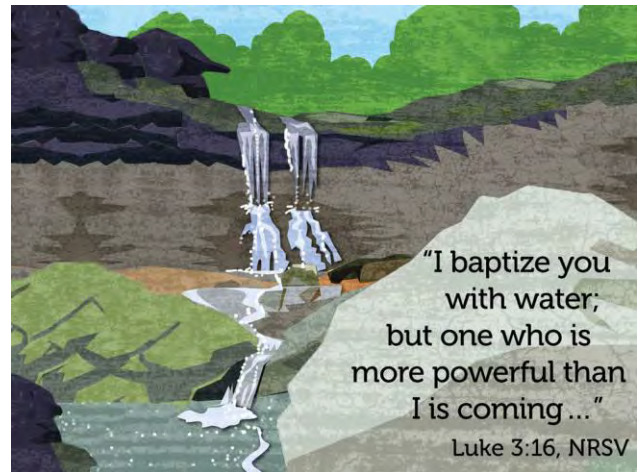
## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)**

**Creator of the universe, we stand amazed at your power and glory. We are eager to worship you and offer our praise, but we are often reluctant to answer when we hear you calling our name. We sing our songs of tribute in the sanctuary, but shy away from the river, lest we be baptized with the fire of the Holy Spirit. Forgive us when we forget your promise to be with us always, O God. Renew us with the power of your ever-present love, and strengthen us to proclaim your justice throughout the world. Amen.**

## **SECOND SCRIPTURE READING**

**Luke 3:7-18 (CEB)**

Then John said to the crowds who came to be baptized by him, “You children of snakes! Who warned you to escape from the angry judgment that is coming soon? Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives. And don’t even think about saying to yourselves, Abraham is our father. I tell you that God is able to raise up Abraham’s children from these stones. The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit will be chopped down and tossed into the fire.”



The crowds asked him, “What then should we do?”

He answered, “Whoever has two shirts must share with the one who has none, and whoever has food must do the same.”

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. They said to him, “Teacher, what should we do?” He replied, “Collect no more than you are authorized to collect.”

Soldiers asked, “What about us? What should we do?” He answered, “Don’t cheat or harass anyone, and be satisfied with your pay.”

The people were filled with expectation, and everyone wondered whether John might be the Christ. John replied to them all, “I baptize you with water, but the one who is more powerful than me is coming. I’m not worthy to loosen the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. The shovel he uses to sift the wheat from the husks is in his hands. He will clean out his threshing area and bring the wheat into his barn. But he will burn the husks with a fire that can’t be put out.”

With many other words John appealed to them, proclaiming good news to the people.

## **MESSAGE**

**“The Gift of Love”**

**Rev. Terry McDorman**

## HYMN

*“The Friendly Beasts”*

(UMH # 227)

## INVITATION TO SHARE

*The day of rejoicing is coming, the prophet Isaiah says, and we await it together; our gifts today in this season of waiting and love help us to strengthen one another and to offer your love to the world as we look forward to that great day of everlasting joy. Let us gather our gifts together and present them as an offering to God.*

## PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

### \*DOXOLOGY

(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!

### \*PRAYER OF DEDICATION (Unison)

**God of Advent love, we bring our offerings with hearts open to your transformative call. In this season of anticipation, may our gifts help mend what is broken and share the promise of redemption. Empower us to live fully present, giving generously and acting justly. Let these offerings be seeds of hope and joy that will draw us closer to your kin-dom. Bless our giving, that it may reflect your love and bring light to our world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.**

## CHORAL CELEBRATION

### CLOSING PRAYER (responsively)

L: God promised to save God's world.

**P: And the people believed.**

L: God sent the prophets to remind them of the covenant of trust and love.

**P: And the people believed.**

L: In the fullness of time, God's promise became incarnate in the life of Mary.

**P: And Mary believed.**

L: Those who were the least and the lost received good news.

**P: And they believed.**

L: We are called to open our hearts, spirits, and minds to God's Good News

**P: That, believing, we may be witnesses to God's great love. Amen.**

### \*CLOSING HYMN

*“I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light”*

(UMH # 206)

## **BENEDICTION**

## **POSTLUDE**

**(Please be seated and silent during the Postlude)**

**ATTENDANCE LAST WEEK: 55**

**ATTENDANCE GOAL: 70**

Our sincere appreciation to all those that contributed to this worship experience!

*Be certain to check the church website, <https://maconilumc.net/> for updated information about the church, events and news. Please use [webmaster.maconumc@gmail.com](mailto:webmaster.maconumc@gmail.com) to submit updates or additions to the church website.*

## **PASTRY WITH THE PASTOR ADVENT BIBLE STUDY**

All adults are invited to join Pastor Terry starting Tuesday morning November 26 at 9:30 for a discussion on “An Unlikely Advent” by Rachel Billups. Nothing to bring but yourself.

## **SERVICE OF CHRISTMAS PEACE**

Tomorrow evening, December 16th, a Service of Christmas Peace is being held at the First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Decatur. This is an ecumenical event and Pastor Terry will be one of the leaders. If you or someone you know is grieving a loss, be it a loved one, health, a job or anything else, this service is meant for you. It matters not when the loss happened or to whom or what the circumstances might be. Perhaps you just need a calm place to reconnect with God in the midst of all the holiday season activities, this service is meant for you. There will be times to listen, to reflect. The music will be provided by the soothing sounds of a harp. If you are concerned about being in Decatur after sunset, the Police Department will have officers on sight. There will also be pastoral care folks ready to listen in case you need someone to talk too afterwards. May you find the true peace of Christmas.

## **HEIFER PROJECT**

Macon is taking donations to support the heifer project again this Advent season.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRESENCE AND SERVICE**

Tue. Dec. 17 9:30 am “Pastry with the Pastor” Advent Study

Sun. Dec. 22 9:00 am Sunday School

Sun. Dec. 22 10:00 am Worship and Zoom Service

Tues. Dec. 24 4:30 pm Christmas Eve Service

Sun. Dec. 29 9:00 am Sunday School

Sun. Dec. 29 10:00 am Worship and Zoom Service—Hymn Sing

## **BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES**

Dec 16 Elizabeth Powell

## **MISSIONS**



Items requested by the food pantry are: Items requested by the food pantry are: Any kind of cereal, cereal bars and/or oatmeal, canned fruit, canned soup, canned pasta, shampoo, bar soap and dish liquid. Cash donations are always welcome.