

Macon United Methodist Church
190 W Bell Street, Macon, IL 62544; (217) 764-5133
December 21, 2025 **Fourth Sunday of Advent**

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

This season, we celebrate a little baby who comes to heal us, to save us, to give us new life...a little baby comes to us to do what no one else can do!

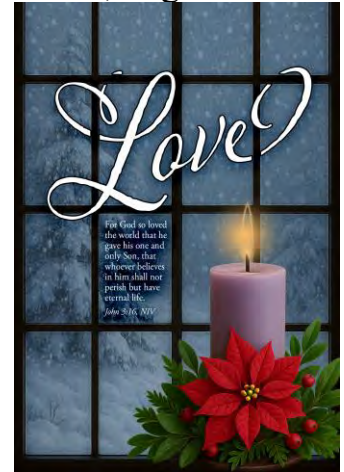
RINGING OF THE CHURCH BELL

PRELUDE

GATHERING **Welcome, Announcements, Celebrations**

***SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

ADVENT SCRIPTURE



Luke 1: 26-55

²⁶ When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" ²⁹ She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. ³¹ Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. ³³ He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

³⁴ Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?"

³⁵ The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son. ³⁶ Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. ³⁷ Nothing is impossible for God."

³⁸ Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her.

³⁹ Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. ⁴⁰ She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you

carry. ⁴³ Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. ⁴⁵ Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her.”

⁴⁶ Mary said,

“With all my heart I glorify the Lord! ⁴⁷ In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior. ⁴⁸ He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant. Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored ⁴⁹ because the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name. ⁵⁰ He shows mercy to everyone, from one generation to the next, who honors him as God. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations. ⁵² He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed. ⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, ⁵⁵ just as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to Abraham’s descendants forever.”



FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT:

Preparing The Way

LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLE Ross, Susannah, Grace and Henry Moyer

ADVENT HYMN “Lo, How a Rose Ever Blooming” (UMH # 216)

1. Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming From tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming As men of old have sung.
It came, a flower bright, Amid the cold of winter When half-gone 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 men a Savior
When half-gone was the night.

3. This Flower, whose fragrance tender With sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor The darkness everywhere. True man, yet very God,
From sin and death He saves us And lightens every load

***CALL TO WORSHIP (responsively)**

We gather this morning, seeking the One who meets us in ordinary places.

God is near, turning simple moments into sacred ones.

The Holy Spirit stirs us, opening our eyes to the work of God in one another.

We come ready to listen, ready to welcome, ready to be shaped by love.

Let us worship the God who lifts up the lowly and fills the world with surprising joy.

With grateful hearts, we offer our praise.

***OPENING HYMN “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:
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:
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:
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:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king.

OPENING PRAYER

O Father, as the burst of an infant's cry penetrated a dark silent night, so may Your love fill our lives with the joy of Christmastime. That child, Your Son, brings a star of hope, a prism of peace, into a world that needs a guiding light. Through the manger, love came down and is born in our lives today. You're able to take a manger and turn it into a cradle of the King. So You're able to take us, sometimes cracked and splintered, at times as rough as a manger, and transform us into beautiful creations. Be born in us today. In Christ we pray. Amen.

COMMUNITY PRAYERS (pastor)

SILENT PRAYER (pastor)

THE LORD'S PRAYER (all)

SCRIPTURE READING

I will sing of the Lord's loyal love forever. I will proclaim your faithfulness with my own mouth from one generation to the next.
²That's why I say, your loyal love is rightly built—forever! You establish your faithfulness in heaven.” ³You said, “I made a covenant with my chosen one; I promised my servant David:
⁴‘I will establish your offspring forever; I will build up your throne from one generation to the next.’”

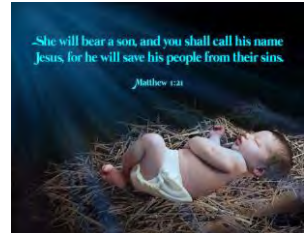
Psalms 89: 1-4



GOSPEL READING

Matthew 1: 18-25

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. When Mary his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn't want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly. ²⁰ As he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." ²² Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled: ²³ *Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, And they will call him, Emmanuel.* (*Emmanuel* means "God with us.")



²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵ But he didn't have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. Joseph called him Jesus.

MESSAGE

"A Divine Dream"

Keith Baker, Lay Speaker

HYMN

"What Child Is This"

(UMH # 219)

1. What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ, the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring Him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.
2. Why lies He in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.
This, this is Christ, the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring Him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.
3. So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh, come, peasant, king, to own him;
the King of kings' salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone Him.
This, this is Christ, the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring Him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.

PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

*DOXOLOGY

(UMH # 95)

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)**

Because You are God of all, we give all we have and all we are. We give these gifts so they will reach places that we cannot. Accept and bless them in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC

CLOSING PRAYER (pastor)

Emmanuel, Emmanuel, blessed be Your name. You are near when the unexpected comes. You understand the heartbreak, the confusion, the hesitation to walk a path never expected.

In Your great mercy bring a hope centered on Your presence, a peace that surpasses all understanding, a grace that supplants all despair, and a tenderness that breaks through loss, for us and for others.

In Your great goodness bring a solution beyond human creation, a strength to bind up wounds, a determination to right the wrongs, a perseverance rooted in Your coming and coming again, for us and for all. Amen

***CLOSING HYMN “*Sing We Now of Christmas*” (UMH # 237)**

1. Sing we now of Christmas, Noel, sing we here!

Hear our grateful praises to the babe so dear.

Refrain: Sing we Noel, the King is born, Noel!

Sing we now of Christmas, sing we now Noel!

2. Angels called to shepherds, "Leave your flocks at rest,
journey forth to Bethlehem, find the lambkin blest."

Sing we Noel, the King is born, Noel!

Sing we now of Christmas, sing we now Noel!

3. In Bethlehem they found him; Joseph and Mary mild,
seated by the manger, watching the holy child.

Sing we Noel, the King is born, Noel!

Sing we now of Christmas, sing we now Noel!

4. From the eastern country came the kings afar,
bearing gifts to Bethlehem guided by a star.

Sing we Noel, the King is born, Noel!

Sing we now of Christmas, sing we now Noel!

5. Gold and myrrh they took there, gifts of greatest price;
there was ne'er a place on earth so like paradise.

Sing we Noel, the King is born, Noel!

Sing we now of Christmas, sing we now Noel!

BENEDICTION (pastor)

Go now in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May your life become a sanctuary where others encounter welcome, compassion, and hope. And may the love of God overflow from this place into every place you go. Amen.

POSTLUDE

Beverly J, Matthews, PsyD
Certified Lay Minister, Supply Pastor
217 825 9010

ATTENDANCE LAST WEEK: 34

ATTENDANCE GOAL: 70

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 to submit updates or additions to the church website.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MISSIONS

The following information is provided in the event that you would want to donate to any or all of the nonprofit organizations who serve our greater communities.

Love Packages

220 Union St.

Butler, IL 62015

2175326701

www.lovepackages.org

Global Ministries

UMCOR

PO Box 9068

New York, NY 10087-9068 designate Texas Floods or another focus

Africa University Development Office

Africa University (TN) Inc.

PO Box 340007

Nashville, TN 37203-0007

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRESENCE AND SERVICE

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

Sun. Dec. 28 9:00 am Sunday School

Sun. Dec. 28 10:00 am Worship and Zoom Service

Sun. Jan. 04 9:00 am Sunday School

Sun. Jan 04 10:00 am Worship and Zoom Service

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Dec 23 Ron Spires

Dec 24 Leah Hinkle

Dec 26 Betty Nicholls

MISSIONS



always welcome.

Items requested by the food pantry are: Any kind of cereal, cereal bars or oatmeal; canned fruits and vegetables; canned soup; canned pasta; mac and cheese; shampoo; and antiperspirant. Cash donations are

SPEAKER SCHEDULE

Dec. 24 Beverly Matthews Certified Lay Minister, Supply Pastor

Dec. 28 Mark Dallner, Certified Lay Speaker