

ST. DAVID'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

December 13, 2020

ADVENT 3

10:00 AM

WELCOME

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Loving God, we rejoice in this season of anticipation as we remember Your promises and look forward to ways that You reveal Yourself to us. May Your presence be real to us in this hour. Strengthen us for victories over temptation, for renewal of our love for You and one another, for leadership and service in Your church and in the world. We give thanks that You have called us into community and commissioned us to make a difference in the world. Equip us here for the tasks You set before us. AMEN

ANTHEM: Sharon Senft & Luke Mumma, "What Child is This?"

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

We light this candle to proclaim the coming of the light of God into the world. With the coming of this light there is love. Such great love helps us to love God and one another.

OPENING HYMN: "O Holy Night"

O holy night! The stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
'Til He appear'd and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.

Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born;
O night divine, O night, O night Divine.

Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming,
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,
Here came the wise men from Orient land.
The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger;
In all our trials born to be our friend.

He knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger,
Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend!
Behold your King, Before Him lowly bend!

Christ is the Lord! O praise His Name forever,
His power and glory evermore proclaim.
His power and glory evermore proclaim.

CHILDRENS MESSAGE: Miss Dee

CALL TO CONFESSION

Again, in this Advent season we are summoned to prepare for God's coming to us in a form we can begin to understand. Jesus accepted all our human limitations yet remained faithful to the eternal law of love. We who have taken this saving action for granted are called to repent and be watchful. Let us confess our disobedience.

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

All knowing God, we confess our worry and anxiety over unimportant matters. We admit the fears that make us defensive instead of loving. We acknowledge our resentment over losses we have sustained and oppression we have suffered. We recognize that we have been far more concerned for our own welfare than for the building up of Christ's body, the church. In our congregation, we have focused on survival more than service. We look for what we can gain more than for what we can give. Re-establish Your rule among us, we pray, and save us from ourselves. Hear our personal petitions. ...

A TIME OF SILENT PERSONAL CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

God clothes us with salvation and covers us with righteousness. Our sins are forgiven, and we begin anew with opportunities to proclaim God's favor, live our thankfulness, and rejoice in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Praise God's holy name today and always!

HOLY SCRIPTURES: Psalm 126; I Thessalonians 5:16–24

Psalm 126

A song of ascents.

- ¹ When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.
- ² Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.
Then it was said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
- ³ The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.
- ⁴ Restore our fortunes, LORD,
like streams in the Negev.
- ⁵ Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.
- ⁶ Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.

1 Thessalonians 5:16–24

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹ but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²² reject every kind of evil.

²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

SERMON: “Rejoice”

PASTORAL PRAYER AND 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

BENEDICTION

Rejoice always. Give thanks to God, whatever your circumstances. Rejoice that you are part of God's family.

CLOSING HYMN: "Count Your Many Blessings"

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,
And you will keep singing as the days go by.

Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold;
Count your many blessings, money cannot buy
Your reward in heaven, nor your home on high.

Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

HYMN NOTES:

O HOLY NIGHT, "Cantique de Noel"

Written in 1847 by Placide Cappeau de Roquemaure in a small French town. He was more known for his poetry than his faithfulness in church attendance. Although not the most likely person to ask to write a mass, a priest asked him to write a poem for a Christmas mass, and he did. Inspired, he wrote "Cantique de Noel," and he was so pleased with his poem that he decided it needed to be a song, but he was not a musician. He turned to a friend, Adolphe Charles Adams, to see if he could set his poem to music.

Adolphe was a famous classical musician and had composed many works around the world, but he agreed to write some music for his friend's poem. Interestingly, Adolphe was a Jewish man who didn't celebrate the birth of Jesus. Nevertheless, he composed music to go with the beautiful poem and the song was performed only a few weeks later at a Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

"Cantique de Noel" became popular in France and was sung in many Christmas Eve services. When it was discovered that Placide Cappeau completely left the church to join a socialist movement and it was discovered that Adolphe Adams was a Jew, the French Catholic church leaders decided the song was unfit for church services because it lacked musical taste and "total absence of the spirit of religion." Even though it wasn't allowed in church, the French people continued to sing it.

A decade later, an American writer, John Sullivan Dwight, saw something in the song that moved him beyond the story of the birth of Christ. Dwight, an abolitionist, strongly identified with the lines of the third verse: "Truly he taught us to love one another; his law is love and his gospel is peace. Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother; and in his name all oppression shall cease." This verse mirrored Dwight's view of slavery in the South. He published his English translation of "O Holy Night" in his magazine, and the song quickly found favor in America, especially in the North during the Civil war.

Back in France, the church continued to ban the song for almost two decades, while the people still sang "Cantique de Noel" at home. Legend has it that on Christmas Eve 1871, in the midst of fierce fighting between the armies of Germany and France, during the Franco-Prussian War, a French

soldier suddenly jumped out of his muddy trench. Both sides stared at the seemingly crazed man who lifted his eyes to the heavens and began singing "Cantique de Noel." Then a German soldier stepped into the open and answered the Frenchman's song with Martin Luther's "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come."

The story goes that the fighting stopped for the next twenty-four hours while the men on both sides observed a temporary peace in honor of Christmas day. Perhaps this story had a part in the French church once again embracing "Cantique de Noel" in holiday services.

But the story of the song continued. Years later on Christmas Eve 1906, Reginald Fessenden—a 33-year-old university professor and former chief chemist for Thomas Edison—did something long thought impossible. Using a new type of generator, Fessenden spoke into a microphone and, for the first time in history, a man's voice was broadcast over the airwaves: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed," he began in a clear, strong voice, hoping he was reaching across the distances he supposed he would.

Shocked radio operators on ships and astonished wireless owners at newspapers were amazed as their normal, coded impulses, heard over tiny speakers, were interrupted by a professor reading the Christmas story. To those who caught this broadcast, it must have seemed like a miracle to hear a voice somehow transmitted to those far away. Perhaps they may have thought they were hearing the voice of an angel. Fessenden was probably unaware of the sensation he was causing on ships and in offices; he couldn't have known that men and women were rushing to their wireless units to catch this Christmas Eve miracle. After finishing his recitation of the birth of Christ, Fessenden picked up his violin and played "O Holy Night," the first song ever sent through the air via radio waves.

Since "O Holy Night" was first sung at a small Christmas mass in 1847, the song has been sung millions of times in churches in every corner of the world. And since the moment a handful of people first heard it played over the radio, the carol has gone on to become one of the most recorded and played spiritual songs. This incredible work, requested by a forgotten parish priest, written by a poet who would later split from the church, given soaring music by a Jewish composer, and brought to Americans to serve as much as a tool to spotlight the sinful nature of slavery as tell the story of the birth of

a Savior has become one of the most beautiful, inspired pieces of music ever created. The Lord can work in amazing ways to his Word to proclaim.

(Information gleaned from Stories Behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas" Zondervan)

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS, (1897)

The author of this hymn is Johnson Oatman, Jr. He was born on April 21, 1856, near Medford, New Jersey. His father was a local merchant who also happened to be a favorite singer in his town. He had a beautiful and powerful booming voice that captivated many people.

The young Johnson Oatman, Jr wanted above all else to follow in the footsteps of his father and be a musician. He wanted to grow up and be like his dad in many other respects besides music.

He initially joined his father's business as a junior member in the Johnson Oatman & Son firm. Due to this, he did not have enough to fulfill his religious ambitions.

He later studied for the ministry in the Methodist church. While he tried his best in his work as an ordained minister in the Methodist church, he soon realized that it was not his thing. He had gone about preaching in various congregations in his area but was not happy.

He knew that he was not going to be a great preacher even though he felt the call of God to ministry. He determined to seek God's will for his life. At the age of 35, he found his calling and never looked back. He realized that while he could not sing like his dad, he could write hymns.

Thus, began a journey that led him to write 200 hymns a year and he eventually wrote 5000 hymns. Oatman had found a way to "preach the gospel". The words of this song were put to music by Edwin Othello Excell. Edwin Othello Excell was born December 13, 1851, in Stark County, Ohio, also a Pastor's son. His father was Rev. JJ Excell was the minister in the German Reformed Church in Ohio.

One writer said about Count Your Blessings, "It is like a beam of sunlight that has brightened up the dark places of the earth." Early on it was especially popular in Great Britain, where it was said, "The men sing it, the boys whistle it, and the women rock their babies to sleep on this hymn." During the revival in Wales, it was one of the hymns sung at every service.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS, December 13, 2020

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICES: Although we had hoped to worship inside on Christmas Eve and were making plans to make that happen, the current Covid-19 situation simply prohibits indoor worship at this time. **Christmas Eve worship services will be Parking Lot services—two (2) services are scheduled, 6:30 PM and 9:00 PM.** There *will not* be a 4:00 PM service.

Yes, we are all disappointed, but the welfare and safety of our worshipers is our top priority, as it should be with all people of faith. "*In humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.*" (Philippians 2:3–4) There are at least 63 verses in the Bible about putting others before ourselves. At this moment in time, parking lot worship is the right thing to do. What can you do to help? Think of others and wear your mask and practice social distancing.

Throughout this pandemic God has shown us signs that he is still the loving and all-powerful God that he has been since time began. The week of Christmas Eve the Christmas Star will be visible in the sky. This is a rare occurrence. Coincidence? Or God! If we were sitting in church on Christmas Eve, we might not even have noticed. Maybe it is a sign from God and we will be right where he wants us to be on Christmas Eve.

***Thank you for all the donated plastic milk containers.
We now have all the milk jugs we need.***

BELL PRACTICE: Mondays, 7:00 PM in the Sunday School wing.

GRIEFSHARE: Details for a new session of GriefShare will be announced in January 2021.

A DRIVE-THRU VISIT WITH SANTA! HO, HO, HO!

Santa is missing seeing and talking to all the children this year because of the pandemic, so Santa and some of his helpers will be stopping by St. Davids for a short visit before Christmas and everyone is invited to drive thru the church parking lot and wave hello to Santa. It would make him feel so much better to see carloads of happy faces waving and saying hello before Christmas Eve. Santa and his helpers will wear their masks like all

good boys and girls are doing these days, but you will be sure to recognize him. Santa will be hanging out by the outdoor Christmas tree on Sunday, December 20 from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm. He is hoping to see carloads of happy children (and adults) drive by and give him a wave. 🙌 p.s. We hear there will be treats for everyone and a small gift for the good girls and boys. HO, HO, HO. We can't wait!

UCC PENSION FUND OFFERING (Benefits Retired Clergy). Offering

Dates: Sunday, December 20 and the Christmas Eve Worship Services. We are able to express our love and compassion for retired UCC Clergy through this offering. These are individuals who have faithfully served their congregations and who now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs. This assistance will benefit those who need help with health insurance premiums, and emergency financial or household needs. Thank you for your contributions.

PRAYER REQUESTS: Please send your prayer requests directly to Pastor Scott either by text (717-880-6082) or e-mail (pastor@stdavidsucc.com or pscott8283@comcast.net) prior to Sunday, so that he can lift them up during worship.

YOUR WEEKLY OFFERINGS: If you would like to mail your offerings to the church, please mail them to Harley Hartman, 2195 Blackrock Rd, Hanover, PA 17331 and include one offering envelope indicating the manner in which you would like to have your funds applied. Thank you for your continued support of the ministries of St. David's!

HANOVER AREA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES VOLUNTEER

OPPORTUNITIES:

PAL — Packing, Serving, If Anyone Would Like to Volunteer For Christmas Day, a Few More Individuals are Needed to Work in the Kitchen.

Changing Lives Shelter — AM And PM Shifts

Meals On Wheels — Runners And Drivers

Front Desk — Tues, Thurs, And Fri Reception Help.

Cleaning— Wed

HACC ITEMS NEEDED:

PAL: Sauerkraut, Large Cans of Green Beans, Sweet Potatoes, Pasta Sauces, Single-serve Fruits, Canned Pears, Scalloped Potatoes Boxes, Corn Bread Mix, Beef and Chicken Broth, Ziploc Sandwich Baggies

Changing Lives Shelter: Large Trash Bag, Paper Towels, Toilet Paper, Disinfectant Wipes/Spray, Umbrellas or Ponchos

HACC General (Benefits All Ministries): Lysol Spray/ Disinfecting Spray

Meals on Wheels: Prayer Cards/ Words of Encouragement for Our Shut-Ins, Large Print Word Find or Crossword Activity Books, (Old Extra-Large Print Devotion Books. We Currently Have 10 Books and Need 30 More to Reach All of Our Shut-ins.

Clothing Bank: Family-Sized Toiletries, Sheet Sets (all sizes), Bath Towels, Men's White T-shirts (L & XL), Baby Diapers (Size 4-5). Open Mon-Thurs 9 am- Noon. Masks required, temperature check, and sanitize hands.)

Ruth's Harvest: Single-serve Entrees, Cereal, Juice Boxes, Snack or Veggies (all single-serve).

COMMUNITY AID UPDATE: Community Aid will be removing the bins from our church property. They are accepting donations of *clothing, shoes, toys, books* and *jewelry* at the store on Baltimore St. Just mention St. David's United Church of Christ and our **Code number, #20003**. Drive-up hours are Monday - Saturday, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM.

NEW HOPE MINISTRIES: What an amazing November! Our loving and supportive church community was there to support the families we serve so that no one would be hungry on Thanksgiving. Because of the food drives, and funds donated, thousands of families received turkeys and all the trimmings. Volunteers and staff served with big smiles under their face masks to bless our guests. Thank you for helping make these loving moments possible for our neighbors in need! We are blessed by your loving support of our programs!! We wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and prayers for a blessed new year.