

Trinitarian Congregational Church
TakeOut
Advent 2 B December 6, 2020

Bells	https://youtu.be/-6qZ9A6GFik	
Announcements		Rev. Rosemary
Prelude:	“Now the Silence” Schalk and Carter https://youtu.be/EdIG6OtNxSo	Lynne Walker
Mission Moment	Dial Self	Phil Ringwood
Advent Candle	“One Candle: An Advent Liturgy for 2020” by Rev. Karen Ware Jackson Permission is granted for home and congregational use. https://youtu.be/VR_rKBRzbRU	Pat Shearer

Light one candle for peace.
Because the world is broken and the wait is long,
 but we refuse to be frozen by fear.
Peace comes in fits and starts
 a deep breath
 a courageous truth
 a humble heart.
“Prepare the way,” she whispers,
 “for the Lord comes to make the broken whole.”
So we light one candle, because it only takes one: Christ with us.

Hymn	“One Candle is Lit” vs 2	Chris Harris
	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.	

Call to Worship		Pat Shearer
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Leader: Listen! A messenger is coming from God.
The way is being readied for Christ’s coming.
People: We have gathered to prepare for Christ’s advent.
We are here to listen for a word from God.
Leader: Come then with your joys and sorrows, your laughter and tears.
Come to this place where valleys are lifted up and mountains are made low.
People: We come here in hope, for we need forgiveness.
We look for assurance, for we are troubled.
Leader: Be not afraid, God speaks tenderly to his suffering people.

God offers to all people comfort and peace.

**People: We will rejoice, for steadfast love and faithfulness have met us.
We will celebrate and live in the promise of God's coming.**

Gathering Prayer

Pat Shearer

Glorious God, we gather today, trusting in the promise that your salvation is drawing near. We need your comfort in these difficult times. We need your warning against our foolish ways. We have not prepared the way for Christ to enter our everyday experience. We do not readily give heed to your word or recognize your presence in our midst. We have pursued our own welfare more than our mission in the world. Grant us your pardon, O God, and renew us in righteousness, that you may be glorified. Amen.

Word of Assurance

Rev. Rosemary

Children of God, hear God's Word of promise

The LORD will show compassion to his people;
he will have loving concern for all that is in ruins.
He will make your desert places like Eden
and your barren wilderness like the garden of God.
Listen to me, my people... My mercy and justice are coming soon.
My salvation is on the way. Isa 51: 3, 4a, 5a adj.

My friends, in Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven and our lives are made new.
Let us offer to one another a sign of God's peace.

Gloria Patri

<https://youtu.be/OLz3R1hnUjs>

Chris Harris

Scriptures

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

Pat Shearer

¹ You have been gracious to your land, O LORD,
you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.

² You have forgiven the iniquity of your people
and blotted out all their sins.

⁸ I will listen to what the LORD God is saying,
for he is speaking peace to his faithful people
and to those who turn their hearts to him.

⁹ Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

¹⁰ Mercy and truth have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

¹¹ Truth shall spring up from the earth,
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

¹² The LORD will indeed grant prosperity,
and our land will yield its increase.
¹³ Righteousness shall go before him,
and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.

Mark 1:1-8

Rev. Rosemary

¹ The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

⁴ John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Special Music

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”
<https://youtu.be/-Nb8P2KTeAA>

Lynne Walker and Chris Harris

Sermon

A Voice in the Desert

Rev. Rosemary

First I want to say “Thank You” to everyone who helped us get a crèche in front of the church. It is lovely and it is a message for everyone, reminding us what this season is all about. We chose to put up a simple crèche with just Mary, Joseph, Jesus and 2 animals. But just down the street Community Bible Church has a crèche with the Holy Family, angels, shepherds, Wiseman, and animals. It too is lovely.

But in every crèche I have ever seen (and I’ve seen many) I’ve never found John the Baptist; which is rather strange because John is an integral part of the life of Christ. In the gospel of Luke, the annunciation of John precedes Gabriel’s visit to Mary; and when the two women meet John greets Jesus while they are still in the womb. So really, it would be fair to say that Christmas isn’t Christmas without John.

But as much as John is a big part of the Christmas season, John doesn’t meet us in tinsel and toys. No John meets us, of all places, in a desert – in the harsh corners of the world and in the hardship of life. And as strange as that may seem, it is a recurring theme in the Bible.

It was in the desert that Moses was called to lead God’s people and it was in the desert that Israel wandered for 40 years, facing hunger and thirst. Yet it was also in the desert where Israel learned of God’s faithfulness and provision, and were formed as his people. It was in the desert that Elijah, running from persecution, wanted to ‘lie down and die’. But it was also where he heard the ‘still small

voice' of God. And it was in the desert where Jesus was tempted by Satan after his baptism, and confirmed his role as the Messiah, returning to Galilee "filled with the power of the Holy Spirit".

We recognize when life is a desert – when there are government crackdowns and civil acts of violence. Life is a desert in refugee camps and communities destroyed by fire and storms. The desert is there when we endure a serious illness and when we lose a loved one. We know the desert.

But here is the gift of God. There is a voice in the desert 'Comfort, comfort my people...Speak tenderly to Jerusalem... Prepare the way of the Lord.'" You see, Christmas has a voice, a comforting voice, a voice crying out in the desert 'Prepare'. When you are ill – prepare. When you are troubled and sorrowful – prepare. When you are tempted or ashamed – prepare. When you are wandering and lost – prepare. Prepare, because you see – God is coming. God is - to us. God is coming to redeem us and to restore us. The kingdom of God, the rule of love and the reign of peace is near. So Prepare.

It may seem counterintuitive to prepare for the glorious, good gift of God in the desert of life, but in reality that is where we most often can experience God, even if it is a struggle. We think God comes to us only when we are at ease, when all is well. But it is the desert, the places of hardship and challenge where we are confronted with what truly matters and where we are challenged to let go of our expectations and demands/claims. It is at those 'pinch points' where God can transform our lives and claim us for his purposes; as he did with Jacob at the river Jabbock, renaming him Israel and achieving God's will through him.

So how do we prepare for God in our deserts? First we prepare for God's coming by seeing our great need for God's salvation, when we recognize our own human frailty and foolishness and say 'God, help, I can't do this alone anymore.' That is how we prepare the way of the Lord. And in truth, there is a comfort in just admitting our limits and needs.

We also prepare for God's coming when we admit we are 'running on empty', that something vital is missing from our lives. And we hear the assurance 'I baptize you with water, but one more powerful than I is coming...he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'" (Mt, Luke) And thirsting for God's presence and power we remember the Holy Spirit is 'Living Water' which Jesus promised "The waters I give you will be a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (John 4:14). That openness to the Holy Spirit is how we prepare the way of the Lord; and it is indeed a comfort, a refreshing fountain for all God's people.

And we prepare also for God's coming when we live God's way – when we share our bread, clothe the threadbare, welcome the stranger, and all the other good works of faith. And we act with such care not just because it is right, or because it 'makes a better world', but because we see and feel and know God's great love, for us, and for all our brothers and sisters in this world. That's how we prepare the way of the Lord. And it is a rich, precious, comfort – for us and for all people.

There is a voice crying in the desert, crying in our world – a voice whispering in our ears and in our hearts – prepare the way of the Lord. It is the voice of Christmas. Will you be prepared? Amen.

Moment of Reflection

When you think about preparing for God's coming what practices or things help you experience God's presence?

Hymn

‘Comfort, Comfort Ye My People’
<https://youtu.be/WmciWie6LhE>

Chris Harris

1. Comfort, comfort ye my people, speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
comfort those who sit in darkness, mourning 'neath their sorrow's load.
Speak ye to Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them;
tell her that her sins I cover, and her warfare now is over.

2. For the herald's voice is crying in the desert far and near,
bidding all men to repentance, since the kingdom now is here.
O that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way;
let the valleys rise to meet him, and the hills bow down to greet him.

3. Make ye straight what long was crooked, make the rougher places plain;
let your hearts be true and humble, as befits his holy reign.
For the glory of the Lord now o'er earth is shed abroad;
and all flesh shall see the token that his word is never broken.

Prayers of the People

Rev. Rosemary

Joys and Concerns

Wondrous God, we thank you and praise you for your faithfulness and goodness to us. We thank you for Jesus Christ, who has come bringing the everlasting comfort of your peace. And we thank you also for your Spirit, who leads us and guides us in your holy way. And so we come before you today seeking your wisdom and power, that we might live according to your good will.

We pray for your church and for this congregation. Help us to prepare ourselves for the coming of your reign, and keep us attentive you're your presence and guidance. Enrich our community with life, that this may be a place where all people can find their way to you.

We pray for all who are leaders among us. Help them to recognize our deepest needs and our common humanity, that they may establish your peace among the nations. And we pray for all who are suffering.

We pray, Merciful God, for all who cry out to you today. Grant your peace to the broken, your hope to the despondent, and your strength to the weary. Grant also your healing to the sick, your comfort to the sorrowful, and your aid to the needy. We especially lift up the needs of ... and we thank you for.... Lead us also, who have known your comfort and help, to share your goodness and grace with all whom our lives touch.

We praise you, Marvelous God, for your all comforts and mercies to us, through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray... Amen.

Lord's Prayer**Choral Response**

<https://youtu.be/OLz3R1hnUjs>

Chris Harris

Special Music

“Advent Medley”
Plainsong, 13th century
<https://youtu.be/pcKGoymYBaM>

Kathryn McAvoy, flutist

Offering

Rev. Rosemary

We are called to announce good news and prepare the way for Christ’s coming.
We are to called offer comfort and practical help to all who are suffering,
that new life may be found by all God’s children.
Let us dedicate our gifts to the end that they may reflect God’s goodness and generosity.

Offertory Prayer

O God, we want to live as faithful followers as we wait and prepare for Christ’s coming.
May our offerings spread the promise of salvation to people whose lives are broken and desperate.
May our gifts offer hope to all who are suffering and support a new way to life for all who lost.
May our lives genuinely reflect your caring presence to all we meet. Amen.

Doxology

<https://youtu.be/5I7PEGUPAXQ>

Chris Harris

Communion

Rev. Rosemary

*Hymn

“O God, Unseen Yet Ever Near”
<https://youtu.be/YDauzgFHkvo>

Chris Harris

1. O God, unseen yet ever near, reveal thy presence now,
while we, in love that hath no fear, before thy glory bow.
2. Here may Thy faithful people know the blessings of thy love -
the streams that through the desert flow, the manna from above.
3. A while beside the fount we stay and eat the bread of thine,
then go, rejoicing, on our way, renewed with strength divine.

Invitation

Beloved in Christ,

Beloved in Christ, the Gospel of Luke records that on the first day of the week,
the same day in which Jesus was raised from the dead,
he sat at the table with two of his disciples,
and was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

**And so for centuries men and women, youth and children,
come from the east and the west, from the north and the south,
and gather about Christ’s table,
for this is the joyful, welcoming feast of the people of God.**

Here Christ is the host and we are his guests.

This table is open to everyone who wishes to know the presence of Christ
and to share in the community of God's people.

Great Thanksgiving

We give you our thanks and praise, O God, or your salvation is drawing near.

In the beginning, you brought forth life according to your good will,
and called humanity into a relationship with you.

When we rejected your will, you did not turn away from us,
but offered us the hope of restoration.

You chose a people for yourself, and spoke through the prophets,
calling us to prepare your gracious way.

In the fullness of time, when all was prepared you sent your son, Jesus Christ—
who was baptized into your purposes, lived as your true servant,
and was crucified and raised to bring about your salvation.

Through him we have been baptized with the power of your Holy Spirit.

And we wait, in hope and gratitude, for the day when your reign will be established
in righteousness and peace.

Therefore we gather now, asking you to pour out your Holy Spirit
upon us, and upon these gifts of bread and cup,
that they may be for us the life of Christ and that we may live his life in this world.

Amen

Consecration and Service

The Bread

We gather now and remember that on the night he was handed over, the Lord Jesus took bread,
and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying,

“Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

In his name, this bread is offered to you.

The body of Christ, the bread of heaven, Take and eat.

The Cup

When the supper was over, he took the cup, and after giving you thanks,
he gave it to his disciples, saying

***“Drink this, all of you; this cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”***

In his name, this cup is offered to you.

The blood of Christ, the cup of salvation. Take and drink.

Prayer of Gratitude

**We thank you God that at this table you have renewed our faith,
strengthened our hope and rekindled our love.
Through the power of the living Christ, at work with in us,
may we now share your gift of life with all we meet. Amen.**

Common Commission

Let us go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil, strengthening the fainthearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted, honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Benediction

Rev. Rosemary

Go now into the world

And may our Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father, who loved us
and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope,
comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word. 2 Thes 2:16-17

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

Postlude

“Gavotte”
GF Handel

Kathryn McAvoy, flutist

https://youtu.be/_prqbgfiaNU