

**Sunday, December 22, 2024 – 9:30 a.m.**  
**4th Sunday of Advent — The Sunday of Love**

**Today's Focus:** Like last week's scripture, this may not seem like a Christmas narrative, but the Gospel of John has a fresh take on how Jesus came into the world, giving us a completely different kind of birth story.

**PRELUDE** — Anneke Toomey

**WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS** — Lin

**PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST** — Lin

**\*OPENING HYMN**                      UMH #240      "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

1. Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;  
With th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

**REFRAIN:** Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

2. Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord!  
Late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail th'incarnate Deity,  
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel. **REFRAIN**

3. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,  
Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth. **REFRAIN**

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP** — Isabella Presnall

One: Let us pause and take a breath.

**Many: We have entered the house of the Lord.**

One: Between last minute plans and belated cards, winter break and the breaking point, recitals, receptions, and ridiculous schedules, let us pause and take a breath.

**Many: We have come here to demonstrate our love for God.**

One: We have come as God's faithful people to celebrate the love of Christ.

**Many: We open our hearts to the Word.**

One: We open our hearts to all Christ has to teach us about loving God and loving our neighbor.

**Many: We stand before God, awaiting Word, and truth, and life.**

One: Let us pause amidst the hustle and bustle of secular Christmas busy-ness and breathe in the love that is found in a Christ-centered advent season.

**All: Let us celebrate the advent of love!**

*Adapted from "Contemporary Gathering" by Hans Holznagel in The Abingdon Worship Annual. Used by permission.*

**LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH — The Candle of Love    Brian & Lin Cheek & Ashley Maine**

**CHILDREN'S STORY — Bonnie Clark**

**HYMN**

TFWS #223 "Where Children Belong"

**CHILDREN'S STORY — Bonnie Clark**

**CHORAL ANTHEM — Chancel Choir (from cantata?)**

**SCRIPTURE:** John 1:1-14— Isabella Presnall

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. <sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

**MESSAGE**

"Christmas According to John"

Rev. Lin Cheek

**RESPONSIVE HYMN**

UMH #235 "Rock-a-Bye, My Dear Little Boy"

1. Rock-a-bye, my dear little boy, dear little boy,  
Wonder of wonders, my blessing and joy;  
Slumber as I gently hold you, let my tender love enfold you;  
Gift of God to me and the world, here in my arms lies so peacefully curled.

2. Little Jesus, Infant Divine, Infant Divine,  
one with the Father, yet born to be mine;  
as I rock you calmly sleeping, angel guards their watch are keeping;  
precious child, one day we shall see what love has destined for you and for me.

**OFFERTORY** — Anneke

**\*DOXOLOGY**

UMH #94

**\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION** — Diana Murray

**All: Dear Lord, thank you for your faithfulness through the ages. You spoke promises through the prophets. In time, you revealed your glory in Jesus Christ. Strengthen us in faith to follow your will today. Empower us to tell our neighbors about you. May these offerings support the ways our church exhibits your steadfast love for all generations. We pray in the name of the Prince of Peace. Amen.**

**PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER** — Lin [are there any joys or concerns today?]

**All: 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**\*CLOSING HYMN** — TFWS #2095 "Star-Child" (please, all five verses)

1. Star-Child, earth-Child, go-between of God,  
Love Child, Christ Child, heaven's lightning rod,  
**REFRAIN:** This year, this year, let the day arrive  
When Christmas comes for everyone, everyone alive.

2. Street child, beat child, no place left to go,  
Hurt child, used child, no one wants to know, **REFRAIN**

3. Grown child, old child, memory full of years,  
Sad child, lost child, story told in tears, **REFRAIN**

4. Spared child, spoiled child, having, wanting more,  
Wise child, faith child, knowing joy in store, **REFRAIN**

5. Hope-for-peace Child, God's stupendous sign,  
Down-to-earth Child, Star of stars that shine, **REFRAIN**

**\*BENEDICTION** — Lin

**\*POSTLUDE** — Anneke Toomey

Prelude/Postlude—Anneke  
Song Leader— Choir  
Liturgist — Isabella Presnall  
Violin — Rae Ann Norell

Accomp.—Anneke Toomey  
Special Music — Choir  
Children's Message— Bonnie Clark

Offertory—Anneke  
Organ — Betsy?