



**Welcome to
Crestholme Presbyterian Church
3rd Sunday of Advent
December 12, 2021**

At the *, please stand, if you are able.
Large Print Hymnals, Bibles, and Hearing Assist Devices are available upon request.

Gather for Worship

PRELUDE

"Lo How a Rose E'er Blooming"

Brahms

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwQsWP97njA>

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE BELLS

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP "Savior of the Nations, Come"

Choir

RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The God of Wisdom calls us to worship;

People: in humility, we gather to offer our thanks and praise.

Leader: The God of Peace calls us to let go of our cares and worries;

People: in faith, we turn to God for hope and guidance.

Leader: The God of Past, Present and Future welcomes us into this moment.

People: in joy, we celebrate life in God's presence!

Leader: Let us worship God together.

People: Hallelujah! Let us praise the Lord!

LIGHTING THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE

Worship Leader: Watch and wait for Christ's coming! Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer.

We light this candle in hope. (Light the first candle).

We light this candle for peace. (Light the second candle).

We light this candle in joy! (Light the third (pink, if used) candle).

To those who live as exiles from home in a dark time, to those enslaved as exiles due to others' oppression, to those who are sin's exiles from their best God-promised selves, the Lord speaks the joy of good news.

A reading from Zephaniah 3:14-20.

Elder, Katie Lamb

Reader 1: Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival.

Reader 2: "I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD.

Let us pray:

Elder, Katie Lamb

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid, for the LORD is my strength and my might; God has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: **Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice!** Sing praises to the LORD, for God has done gloriously!

*** ADVENT CAROL "Light the Advent Candle"**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9wz6oTxF5Q>

Light the advent candle Three, think of heav'nly harmony,
angels singing, "peace on earth," at the Holy Savior's birth.
Candle, candle, burning bright, shining in the cold winter night.
Candle, candle burning bright, fill our hearts with Christmas light.

OPENING PRAYER

New every morning is your love, great God of light, and all day long you are working for good in the world. Stir up in us the desire to serve you, to live peacefully with our neighbors and all your creation and to devote each day to your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*** OPENING HYMN "Angels From the Realms of Glory" Blue Hymnal #22**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5CZ8STVcks>

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Now in humility and trust, we pray for the forgiveness of our sins:

Mighty and powerful God, your word says, "Rejoice always." But we would rather sulk about the things that don't go right. Your word says, "Pray without ceasing." But we go for days without even thinking about You. Your word says, "Give thanks in all circumstances." But our thankfulness is fleeting, because we think we deserve blessings. Your word says "Hold fast to what is good," while we hold fast to sinful ways of thinking and acting.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

The prophets of old have declared, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God. For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robes of righteousness. Friends, believe the good news: in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

* **GLORIA PATRI**

Blue Hymnal #579

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUBxpypSblw>

* **SHARE THE PEACE OF CHRIST (From your seats, please)**

Leader: Peace be with you!

All: And also with you!

Leader: As God's forgiven people, share the peace of Christ with each other.

Hear the word of God

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Wise and patient God, in the midst of distractions, help us focus on your presence with us. In the midst of confusing voices, make your Word plain. In the midst of competing desires, show us the path to follow for the sake of Jesus, our friend, teacher and guide, **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Sing, Daughter Zion; shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm.

¹⁶ On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, Zion; do not let your hands hang limp.

¹⁷ The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing."

¹⁸ "I will remove from you all who mourn over the loss of your appointed festivals, which is a burden and reproach for you.

¹⁹ At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you. I will rescue the lame; I will gather the exiles. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they have suffered shame.

²⁰ At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes^[a] before your very eyes," says the LORD. (NIV)

SECOND READING

Isaiah 12:2-6

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation." ³ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

⁴ In that day you will say:

"Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. ⁵ Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. ⁶ Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you." (NIV)

CHORAL ANTHEM

"Long Ago Prophets Knew"

Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S63rjDtYRYg>

NEW TESTAMENT READING

Philippians 4:4-7

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

GOSPEL READING

Luke 3:7-18

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." "What should we do then?" the crowd asked. John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same." Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them. Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay." The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them. (NIV)

SERMON

"Advent Joy"

Fred Archer

Written by The Rev. Marcea Paul

The Third Sunday of Advent is traditionally known as Gaudete Sunday. "Gaudete," when translated from Latin, means "rejoice". We know that Advent is a season of waiting and today we are called to be joyful as we await the coming of Jesus Christ.

God, through Zephaniah, offers us glimpses of a hopeful future and calls us to "Rejoice and exult with all our heart." Isaiah reminds us of the ways God has delivered us, is delivering us, and will deliver us. He invites us to shout aloud and sing for joy because we shall "draw water with rejoicing from the springs of salvation." And our cheerleader, St. Paul, strongly urges us to "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice."

We have been experiencing tough times these last few years. With the suffering, loss, uncertainty, and state of our beautiful and broken world, how can we hear these words and rejoice?

In our minds, joy tends to overlap with happiness. Happiness is often connected with what is happening to us and around us. Happiness usually lasts for just a season. When we are discouraged and afraid, rejoicing in the Lord can be a hard sell. But the truth is that joy is not usually inspired by happy circumstances. Poet and author David Whyte writes, "To feel a full and untrammled joy is to have become fully generous; to allow our selves to be joyful is to have walked through the doorway of fear." And joy, unlike happiness, lasts – no matter what the challenges.

The prophets looked forward to the day of the Lord's coming as a time of great joy. Even Zephaniah, who has been called the most despondent of the prophets, kept the last word for joy—joy over the Lord's presence, joy over renewal and restoration, and joy over coming home. While Isaiah also speaks of doom and gloom, he looks forward to the Lord's coming as a time for shouting joyfully, "Surely God is my salvation." Isaiah looks forward to the Lord's coming as a day when the people would drink their fill of salvation like someone drawing fresh water from a well – certainly a day of great rejoicing.

It is believed that the Apostle Paul was under house arrest when he wrote the words we heard from his letter to the Philippians. And still, Paul could say, "Rejoice!" One might wonder what he had to rejoice about in that situation. Well, Paul rejoiced because he looked forward to the Lord's coming, but he also rejoiced because the Lord is always near. Paul seemed to have experienced the Lord's constant presence in his imprisonment. And so, he could say, "Rejoice!" Paul carried the joy of Advent with him wherever he went – even in a Roman jail.

Advent is not only a season for waiting. It is also a time of preparation – a time of looking for the coming of the Lord, for the fulfillment of God's promised restoration, for the peace that overcomes all violence, and for that perfect love that casts out fear.

John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for Jesus. He was sent into difficult, complicated times – times like we are experiencing. And his message was simple: repent; turn your lives around; turn back to God. For John, repentance was not about beating ourselves up for things done or left undone; to repent meant total transformation – transformation that bears fruit.

Snakes are what John the Baptist calls the people who venture into the desert: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Yet, they do not turn and run. Instead, they listen to his sermon. You must bear fruit, he tells them. Do not rely on your ancestry, your tradition, or your history. This is about you preparing yourselves for the One who is to come. When John finished preaching, they asked "How do we repent?" "What should we do?"

John doesn't ask the people to change the world, but rather to change themselves. He doesn't tell them to leave their lives and stay with him or start a revolution; he tells the crowds who came to him to consider sharing what they have with the cold and hungry. He told the tax collectors to be honest and fair. The soldiers, he cautioned to act with integrity, avoiding abuse of their power. "Go home," John told them. Go home to your families, your neighbors, your vocations, your friends. Go home and live your lives as deeply and as generously as you can right now. Do what the Lord requires of you and do it now. Be generous *now* - Be merciful *now* - Do justice *now*.

What does this all mean for us? In this Advent season, are we seeking the answers to the question "What should we do?" As we wait and as we look forward to the coming of the Messiah, are we engaging in the kind of deep self-reflection that leads to action? Or have we fallen into complacency? Are we gathering like the crowds in John's story, moving toward genuine repentance? Or are we turning away? In our baptisms, we are marked as Christ's own forever, and it is the meaning of this mark that John called his followers to embrace – and is calling us to embrace. Through baptism, we are cleansed and renewed with water from the springs of salvation before being sent out to serve.

We might think that focusing our attention on what we long for but do not yet have might be a cause for discouragement rather than joy. But, perhaps, it is that very act of watching and waiting and looking for the coming of God that inspires great joy. The Gospel writer calls John's exhortation "good news." And it is, especially if we believe that we are not worthy of God's saving grace. Nothing in our lives is beyond redemption. Knowing and accepting this is reason enough for rejoicing.

This is not easy. That's why it takes intentional preparation and repentance – which means amending our lives and turning toward God. That is what we must do to prepare in this holy season. Advent is beckoning us to do just that, and it encourages us with a promise, rather than a threat: the promise of the coming embrace of Christ and the gift of abundant life that he brings.

John the Baptist appeared as an itinerant preacher. Yet, ironically, he is remembered by the Church as the patron saint of spiritual joy. Perhaps he earned that title since, earlier in Luke's gospel, Elizabeth voiced how the baby in her womb leaped for joy at the presence of Mary and Jesus. It was John's great joy to always be pointing to Jesus. Today, it is our great joy to be waiting for the coming of Jesus.

On this Gaudete Sunday, as we wait and prepare, we are also called to rejoice. The coming of the Messiah and the Gospel of Jesus Christ are the Good News the angel will speak of when appearing to the shepherds, "I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people." This brings us hope even amid our struggles so that when the Christ child arrives at the manger, we can rejoice and sing with gusto, "Joy to the world! The Lord is come." For now, we pray, "Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us." **Amen**

*** HYMN**

"Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"

Blue Hymnal #37

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwkkclFxfJE>

Respond in Love and Service

*** AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

Leader: Let us declare our faith in God.

All: We believe that the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, who still upholds and rules them by his eternal counsel and providence, is our God and Father because of Christ his Son. We trust him so much that we do not doubt he will provide whatever we need for body and soul, and he will turn to our good whatever adversity he sends us in this sad world. He is able to do this because he is almighty God; he desires to do this because he is a faithful Father. Nothing will separate us from his love. Amen

PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

God's goodness fills the world, if only we have eyes to see it. God's goodness fills the world, if only we have hearts to share what God has given us. Know that your gifts come from God's goodness and pass that goodness along to others in Jesus' name.

*** DOXOLOGY**

Blue Hymnal #592

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uyg6-htOtHU>

*** PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Father God, we watch the news and believe that you were speaking to our time when you spoke privately to the disciples on the Mount of Olives. You caution us not to be lead astray. We are trying, Lord, to keep our eyes fixed on you. We have worshipped you in song and prayer. We have listened for your Word. Now, we humbly place before you these offerings and tithes. May our resolve be strong to do your will and follow your path. For the sake of Jesus, we pray. Amen. **Amen.**

*** HYMN FOR OUR NATION**

"Heal Our Land"

Red Hymnal #800

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTm_rA54EGw

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father, as once again we prepare for Christmas, help us to find time in our busy lives for quiet and thought and prayer, that we may reflect upon the wonder of your love and allow the story of the Savior's birth to penetrate our hearts and minds. So may our joy be deeper, our worship more real, and our lives worthier of all that you have done for us through the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

We pray for the church:

- For the Christian family who will be celebrating this festival in so many different ways, and for those who dare not celebrate openly.
- For Christians in countries where there is persecution.
- For Christians in our own country, with whom we will share our celebrations
- For our Church family.

Grant that all who come into our church this Christmas time may be enabled to renew their relationship with you. Help us all to be glad of your presence, and to rejoice at the coming of Jesus.

May your blessing be upon all who worship with us, give us grace to live as faithful members of your family, that we may learn each day afresh to love and serve you Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for Peace:

- Give peace to the world
- Give peace to the victims of war, the refugees, the widowed and the orphans.
- Give peace to family and friends; to those who have quarreled and need to be reconciled.
- Give peace in our own divided hearts.

We know that without justice there can be no peace. Let peace come when all people are respected, regardless of race and religion. Let peace come when trading weapons of mass destruction is a crime. Let peace come when the earth's resources are used wisely for the common good. Let peace come when money is used to serve and not enslave the world. Let peace come through the transformation of our lives that we may do justice, love and kindness and walk humbly with our God.

Your Son came as the Prince of Peace and brought a message of Peace for all people. Help us to be Peacemakers in our own homes, at our work or wherever we meet people, so that the peace and goodwill of Christmas can find a place in the hearts of all people. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for homeless people and for refugees who have no country to call their own. Let your blessing be with those who work to help the homeless this Christmas, and give to all of us the

determination to help where we can.

We pray for people who are lonely, those who are lonely because they have lost a partner, those who are lonely because no-one seems to care, those who are lonely because of handicap or illness. Let your presence be with those who are alone at this season of friendship and may we take your friendship to those whom we know will be alone this Christmas.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for friends and family who are ill at this time, and remember them in the quietness of our hearts. We bring them to you in the confidence that you love them and know their every need and that your healing power is still the same today. Bless all that is being done for their recovery and answer our prayers as you see best

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light which no darkness can quench. We remember friends and family who have died and light a candle to symbolize the light of Christ which eternally shines and brings hope. We remember today

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Help us to experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit within us, and the fellowship of the church family around us until we are reunited once more in your heavenly kingdom

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You turn our darkness into light; in your light shall we see light

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Join me now as we together pray the prayer Jesus taught his disciples:

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 those 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 and ever.

Amen.

* **CLOSING HYMN**

"Once In Royal David's City"

Blue Hymnal #49

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRIZ22dn-XY>

* **BENEDICTION**

[Psalm 51:12](#) says, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."

Lord, would you restore the joy of our salvation? Help us to be willing to follow you with all we have. As we read the Scriptures that remind us who you are and the ways you love us, ignite in us a sense of joy that overflows out of our hearts! Let this holy joy be contagious and spill over onto the lives of those around us. May your peace that surpasses all understanding be upon us...especially as we're wrapping up a year that has felt very scary and uncertain. Encourage our hearts with the knowledge that with *you* we can live in your perfect peace, no matter our circumstances. We thank you for the joy and peace you give! **Amen.**

Be people of joy.

Let joy live in your heart and share the joy of Christ with all you meet.

Share joy by seeing the good in each other.

Share joy by remembering good times and hoping for good times to come.

Share joy by praying for our world.

In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share joy.

As you go out into the wonder of God's creations, share joy, peace, and hope with those you meet. **Amen.**

. **The End of Today's Worship Service – The Beginning of Service
Announcements**

Welcome to worship with us this morning! We're glad that you're here! If you do not have a church home, we invite you to become a part of our compassionate church family... ask Carlos, Larry or an Elder about meaningful participation and membership!

Next Sunday CLP Larry Sears will lead the service.

Weekly Calendar

TBD	TBD	Food Pantry
TBD	TBD	Clothes Closet
Sunday	10:00 AM	Sunday School
Sunday	11:00 Am	Worship Service

Holy Communion is observed the First Sunday of each month.

Crestholme Presbyterian Church Officers

Session

<u>Class of 2021</u>	<u>Class of 2022</u>	<u>Class of 2023</u>
Cathie Owen	Irene Thomas	Katie Lamb
Netsy Williamson	Steve Tovar	

Clerk of the Session: Dick Crist
Church Treasurer: Fred Archer

Trustees

<u>Class of 2021</u>	<u>Class of 2022</u>	<u>Class of 2023</u>
Penny Christoff	Fred Archer	Tommy Rudwick

Crestholme Presbyterian Church Staff

Stated Supply Minister	Vacant
Pulpit Supply Preachers	Dr. Carlos Baladez CP, Larry Sears Elder, Fred Archer
Choir Director	Robin Bernhard
Organist	Cathie Owen
Secretary/Coordinator	Vacant

Membership in the Presbyterian Church is open to those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Every member and officer will be more than happy to visit with you about salvation by faith in Jesus and membership at Crestholme.

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