

BLOOMING GROVE
United Church of Christ
2 Old Dominion Road
Blooming Grove, NY 10914
The Rev. Dr. Linda U. Barnes – Pastor



WORSHIP SERVICE
Second Sunday of Advent (Year C)
December 5, 2021 - 10:30 a.m.

The Rev. Dr. Linda U. Barnes - Pastor
Janiece Kohler – Minister of Music
Michael Matsler - Liturgist

ORDER OF WORSHIP

GREETING

Rev. Linda Barnes

PRELUDE “Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne” M. Hayes, arr.

CALL TO WORSHIP

The Reign of God is drawing near:

The prophet calls us to change our lives!

Prepare the way of the Lord:

A just and peaceful path!

Welcome one another as Christ welcomes you:

For the glory of God!

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Rev. Barnes

Holy God, we long for your peace and trust in your promises. We hear your call to change our lives and turn toward you anew. Meet us here; fill our minds with your wisdom, and our hearts with your peace. May our worship open us to the challenge of your dream of wholeness for all. In the Name of the Emmanuel, we pray. Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God, you call us to turn our lives around and work with patience and diligence to prepare the way for your Reign, but we get discouraged and give up too soon.

Lord, have mercy.

O God, you call us to collaborate in the community to prepare the way for your Reign, but we neither trust nor honor the gifts of others.

Christ, have mercy.

O God, you call us to be full of joyful confidence to prepare the way for your Reign, but we burden ourselves with anxiety and fear.

Lord, have mercy. Forgive us, O God, and lead us in the ways of patience, community, and joy.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

Hear the good news: Jesus, our Savior, is present with us in the painstaking work of the Reign of God, forgiving our weakness, rebuilding our relationships, restoring our joy. We celebrate God's merciful grace as we share in Christ's peace.

Thanks be to God!

PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

May the powerful peace of Christ be with you now and always.

And also with you.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE – “PEACE”

We light this second candle of Advent, a candle of Peace. In its light let us reflect what voices of true life-change and forgiveness are speaking in the world today. We affirm all the ways we seek peace.

(The candle of Peace is lit.)

Let this candle shine in our hearts all week and remind us to enter times of quiet and peace to prepare for the Holy One. We light the candles of Hope and Peace, and pray that we will hear the angel mandate of 'Peace on Earth.'

I will light candles this Christmas – candles of joy despite all the sadness, candles of hope where despair keeps watch, candles of courage for fears ever-present, candles of peace for tempest-tossed days, candles of grace to ease heavy burdens, candles of love to inspire all my living, candles that will burn all year long.

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

“Light a Candle for Peace”

MEDITATION [♪]

“Meditation on ‘Huron Carol’” J. Carter, arr.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Michael Matsler

Out of the embrace of mercy and righteousness you have brought forth joy and dignity for your people, O Holy One of

Israel. Remember now your ancient promise: Make straight the paths that lead to you and smooth the rough ways, that in our day we might bring forth your compassion for all humanity. Amen.

RESPONSIVE READING – Luke 1:68-79 Mike Matsler, leader

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,

for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

God has raised up a mighty savior for us

in the house of his servant David,

as God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

Thus God has shown the mercy

promised to our ancestors,

and has remembered God's holy covenant,

the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,

to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,

might serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High,

for you will go before God to prepare his ways;

to give knowledge of salvation to the people

by the forgiveness of their sins.

By the tender mercy of our God,

the dawn from on high will break upon us,

to give light to those who sit in night and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.

SCRIPTURE READINGS Mike Matsler and Rev. Barnes, readers

Lesson from the Apocrypha

Baruch 5:1-9

Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem, and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God. Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God; put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting; for God will show your splendor everywhere under heaven. For God will give you evermore the name, "Righteous Peace, Godly Glory." Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height; look toward the east, and see your children gathered from west and east at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that God has remembered them. For they went out from you on foot, led away by their enemies; but God will bring them back to you, carried in glory, as on a royal throne. For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills be made low and the valleys filled up, to make level ground, so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God. The woods and every fragrant tree have shaded Israel at God's command. For God will lead Israel with joy, in the light of his glory, with the mercy and righteousness that come from him.

Epistle Lesson**Philippians 1:3-11**

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Gospel Lesson**Luke 3:1-6**

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

SERMON “So Many Rough Places: Finding God’s Way”

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (& The Lord’s Prayer)

HYMN #110 (NCH)

“Now Bless the God of Israel”

- 1. Now bless the God of Israel,
who comes in love and power,
who raises from the royal house
deliverance in this hour.
Through holy prophets God has sworn
to free us from alarm,
to save us from the heavy hand
of all who wish us harm.**
- 2. Remembering the covenant,
God rescues us from fear,
that we might serve in holiness
and peace from year to year;
And you, my child, shall go before
to preach, to prophesy,
that all may know the tender love,
the grace of God most high.**

**3. In tender mercy, God will send
the dayspring from on high,
our rising sun, the light of life
for those who sit and sigh.
God comes to guide our way to peace,
that death shall reign no more.
Sing praises to the Holy One!
O worship and adore!**

CALL TO OFFERING

Rev. Barnes

The Ruler of Peace is coming, the prophet says; we await that Gift of God together. We bring our gifts in this season of waiting and hope. Help us strengthen one another and offer hope to the world as we look forward to that great day of everlasting peace, through Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-Us.

We dedicate our offerings given online (www.bgucc.org) and those placed on the offering plate by the door or mailed to the church and give thanks to God for each contribution.

UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

With these gifts, dear God, accept the praise and thanksgiving of our hearts, which rejoice in your goodness and love. Let our gifts point to your presence in the world. Amen.

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Communion liturgy by Maren Tirabassi with excerpts from Todd Jenkins' longer poem, Adventure. (Used by permission)

Invitation

The sacred unfolding of these gifts—hope, peace, love, and joy—will usher in a new vision of community that's more filled with justice than we've ever dreamed, as it invites everyone to the table, which causes us to scramble for more chairs. Come to think of it, maybe searching for ways to extend the table is precisely what Advent is supposed to be about.

Words of Remembering

We remember that Jesus was always about more chairs—for the “friendly beasts”—a cow whose manger fed him, the birds that never fall unloved, and the comforting animals of his forty wilderness days. Jesus was always about more chairs, for the poor, lonely, grieving, hungry, the most vulnerable and rejected, and even those deep in deserved regret. And we remember that Jesus sat in the chairs of anyone who welcomed him. He came to tables and asked for food, not to see the guest list. He knew how to multiply barley loaves but, also, how to grill fish.

In the sacrament on Advent's day of Peace, we remember that the starlit Child, protected by angels, grew up to offer bread and cup to a betrayer, a denier, a doubter, several sleepers, many who fled, because at the cross there were no angels.

(cont'd)

We remember that Jesus is in the Bread and Cup for those of us who know its blessing well, and yet is still pulling out folding chairs so that more....even all can come, sit, rest, eat.

Unison Prayer of Consecration

Emmanuel, God-with-Us, in the hopes and fears of all our years, we come for comfort, for peace of mind and peace on earth, for a blessing on our hands and the Bread in them, on our lips and the Cup we lift to drink.

Sharing the Elements

The Holy Child of Bethlehem descends to us,
and is born in us in these days.

Let us share the bread.

We hear Christmas angels their great glad tidings tell.

Let us drink deeply for in every time Christ abides with us.

In every time and every place Christ abides with us.

(All partake of the bread and cup)

Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving

Peace-giver, Blessor of tables shared and some tables turned over, we rise from our places at this most welcoming meal prepared anew to live Advent hospitality, by becoming your people, ushers and servers for the worldwide banquet of grace. Amen.

POSTLUDE “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” J. Carter, arr.

CHARGE & BENEDICTION

Rev. Barnes

Let us go forth with eyes to see and ears to hear and voices to proclaim Christ: In the work of justice, in the practice of mercy, in good news for the poor, in the vision of peace. **Amen.**

PARTING HYMN (NCH #81, verse 1) “God Be with You”

**God be with you till we meet again;
By good counsel guide, uphold you,
With a shepherd’s care enfold you:
God be with you till we meet again.**

Refrain

**Till we meet, till we meet,
Till we meet at Jesus’ feet;
Till we meet, till we meet
God be with you till we meet again. Amen.**

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