

PROVIDENCE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Order of Worship

DECEMBER 22, 2024

CALL TO WORSHIP*

from Isaiah 49.1-3

Minister: Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called Him from the womb, from the body of my mother He named His name.

All: He made His mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He hid Him; He made Him a polished arrow; in His quiver He hid Him away. And He said to Him, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”

PRAYER OF INVOCATION AND ADORATION*

HYMN*

God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen | No. 211

GOD REST YE MERRY

Stanzas 1-3

God rest ye merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas day,
To save us all from Satan's pow'r when we were gone astray.

*Refrain: O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.*

From God our heavenly Father, a blessed angel came;
And unto certain shepherds brought tidings of the same:
How that in Bethlehem was born the Son of God by name.

Refrain

“Fear not, then,” said the angel, “let nothing you affright.
This day is born a Savior of a pure virgin bright,
To free all those who trust in him from Satan's pow'r and might.”

Refrain

CONFESSION OF FAITH

adapted from The Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 15-18

Minister: What kind of Savior must we seek?

All: We seek the One who embodies truth and righteousness, surpassing the power of all creation. To atone for our sin, He must be truly human, for God's justice demands that the same human nature which sinned must also make atonement. He must also be perfectly righteous, for only One who is sinless can atone for others. And finally, He must be truly divine, able to endure the weight of God's wrath in His humanity, securing our righteousness and restoring us to life. This is our Lord Jesus Christ -- the eternal Word made flesh, fully God and fully man!

SONG OF PRAISE

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming | No. 221

Stanzas 1, 2 and 4

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung,
of Jesse's lineage coming,
as men of old have sung.
It came, a flow'ret bright,
amid the cold of winter,
when half-spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
the rose I have in mind;
with Mary we behold it,
the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright
she bore to men a Savior,
When half-spent was the night.

This flow'r, whose fragrance tender
with sweetness fills the air,
dispels with glorious splendor
the darkness ev'rywhere.
True man, yet very God;
from sin and death he saves us
and lightens ev'ry load.

PUBLIC CONFESSION OF SIN

Minister: Let us confess our sins before our righteous and holy God.

All: Heavenly Father, we confess that we are easily distracted and constantly diverted from your ways. The world clamors for our attention, and we are quick to follow our own sinful hearts, chasing after fleeting pleasures and empty promises. We often focus more on our sinfully defined desires and aspirations than on living for the sake of your kingdom and your glory. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you did not guard your own interests but chose to leave the comfort and richness of heaven to enter our world. You willingly became one of us, born of the Virgin Mary, to make your rebellious enemies into your redeemed brothers and sisters. Change our selfish hearts, we pray. Fill them with love and gratitude, so that following you will be our greatest joy and delight. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

PRIVATE CONFESSION OF SIN

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Romans 5:1

Hear the promises of God to those who truly repent of their sins and trust in Christ: Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Children's Time

After the intercessory prayer, children in kindergarten through 3rd grade and their teachers may exit the sanctuary through the north doors of the sanctuary. Teachers will return with the children after the sermon. Parents may meet them by the north entrance, or children may join their parents at their seats.

SCRIPTURE READING*

Luke 2.1-14

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” (NIV)

SERMON

God’s Sovereignty in a Census

Rev. David Rea

HYMN OF RESPONSE*

***Gentle Mary Laid Her Child* | No. 229**

TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM

Stanzas 1-3

Gentle Mary laid her child lowly in a manger,
There he lay, the Undefined, to the world a stranger.
Such a babe in such a place, can he be the Savior?
Ask the saved of all the race who have found his favor.

Angels sang about his birth, wise men sought and found him,
Heaven’s star shone brightly forth, glory all around him.
Shepherds saw the wondrous sight, heard the angels singing,
All the plains were lit that night, all the hills were ringing.

Gentle Mary laid her child lowly in a manger,
He is still the Undefined, but no more a stranger.
Son of God of humble birth, beautiful the story,
Praise his name in all the earth, hail the King of glory!

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S TABLE

All those who trust in Christ alone for their salvation, are baptized, and belong to a Bible believing church are invited to partake of the Lord's Supper together, feeding on the grace of God by faith.

If you have not put your trust in Christ, please allow the elements to pass you by and take this opportunity to meditate on the meaning of the Gospel.

A word to parents: Baptized children are invited to the table after they have made a profession of faith and been received as communing members by the Session of the church to which their parents belong.

Please hold the bread, and we will partake together. Please drink the cup as you receive it.

The outer ring is grape juice and the inner rings are wine.

During the bread

***Away in a Manger* | No. 205**

CRADLE SONG

Stanzas 1-3

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.*

*The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes;
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.*

*Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray;
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.*

During the cup

Instrumental

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

CLOSING HYMN*

Angels We Have Heard on High | No. 214

GLORIA

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, echo back their joyous strains.

Chorus: Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be, which inspire your heav'nly song?

Chorus

Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing,
Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

Chorus

BENEDICTION*

Numbers 6:24-26

Minister: The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.