



December 3, 2023 - 9:30 am – Worship Guide
Co-Pastors: Rev. Ron Harris and Rev. Karla Sheffy
Worship Accompanist: Sue Woods
Musical Offering: Natalie Denton



Gathering Video

Welcoming - Gary Ace

Welcome to all our worshipping congregation today, in person, KVOE listeners and to those watching on-line.

My name is Gary Ace and this morning I am your worship reader. We give thanks for your presence today!

Welcome to Emporia First United Methodist Church. We are all beloved children of God. Together, we are a Christian community committed to accepting, valuing, and loving all. We seek to live, grow, and serve as Jesus taught us: loving one another, transforming lives, and making disciples. Let us now worship!

Prelude and Lighting the Candles - Acolytes: Madison Conley & Lucy Barrett

Becoming Present — an Advent Ritual — Rev. Ron Harris

Leader: Advent can be filled with worry about finding the perfect Christmas gifts. Deep down we want people in our lives to know they are special and that we love them. But sometimes we overlook the greatest gift of all... our very presence. The 19th century poet, Christina Rossetti, wrote "In the Bleak Midwinter" that became a popular Christmas carol. Modern composer, Mark Hayes, set the last verse of that poem to music as our theme song for our Advent/Christmas series. It reminds us that even if we are feeling poor — in resources, in body or spirit — we can simply be a gift of presence, we can give our hearts.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.

Reader: We unwrap a present on this first Sunday of Advent with great anticipation for the gift that God will reveal.

People: We open our hearts as we open the gift!

Reader: The promise of Hope is the Divine Gift we receive.

***People:* And what will we do with it?**

Reader: The gift of hope is an essential survival tool because it reminds us that the hard times do not have the last word. Hope is not simply a wish. Hope calls us into action based on a belief that things can be different. We can work to bring about the better world that we hope for.

***People:* We light this Candle of Hope as a sign that we will be Present with Hope in the world.**

**What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.**

Prayer of Presence

Let us pray:

Holy Living Light of God, you are our Hopeful Presence.

Let this hope grow in our lives each day, so we can be a Present of Hope to others.

Unwrap and open our hearts. May it be so.

Amen.

Opening Hymn

[“What Gift Can We Bring”](#)

UMH 87

* *PASSING OF THE PEACE OF CHRIST* (Greeting in the name of Christ)

Children’s Moment – Cindy Kienholz and Emma Beatty

Celebrating the Sacrament of Holy Baptism....*Isobel Christina Chronister Cooper*

[Hymn](#)

[“Child of Blessing, Child of Promise”](#)

UMH 611 vs. 1 & 4

Scripture Readings—Liturgist

Psalm 80: 1-2

Reader: The book of Psalms was the songbook of the Hebrew people. Psalm 80 was written in a time when the people were exiled from their homeland. In it we hear the conviction and hope that God will restore the people. Let us read responsively:

*Shepherd of Israel, hear us,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned on the cherubim, shine out!
Shine out before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh!
Awaken your power and come to save us!
O God, return to us — let your face smile on us,
and we will be saved!*

1 Corinthians 1: 4-7

Another community at a later time — the early Christians — also lived in a time of oppression by the Roman occupiers. The letters that circulated among them gave them hope for the future. Hear this excerpt from the First Letter to the Corinthians:

I continually thank my God for you because of the gift bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, in whom you have been richly endowed with every gift of speech and knowledge. In the same way, the testimony about Christ has been so confirmed among you that you lack no spiritual gift, as you wait for the revelation of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Musical Offering

[“He Is the Gift”](#)

Natalie Denton

Sermon

“Being Present With Hope”

Rev. Karla Sheffy

Responding in Gratitude for God’s Gifts with our Offerings – **Rev. Ron Harris**
Invitation

Celebrating the Sacrament of Holy Communion

Hymn

“It Came Upon a Midnight Clear”

UMH 218

* Sharing Opportunities for Ministry

Rev. Ron Harris

*Benediction

**“The good news of Jesus Christ is that God is with us,
no matter what, no matter where, no matter when.**

**There is no place you can go where God is not,
no time of the day when God is off the clock.**

This is the teaching of the Incarnation, God with us, Emmanuel.”

[adapted from Amy Oden, Right Here, Right Now]

So now go and be truly present
so you may be a gift of presence for others.
That’s all that is expected —
that the gift that is YOU
is the best gift you can give.

In the name of the Holy Presence,
the Divine Gift,
and the Spirit of Hope that is just waiting for us
to unwrap abundant life. Amen.

***Closing Song**

“Star Child”

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Postlude