



December 8, 2024

Co-Pastors: Rev. Ross Baker and Rev. Amanda Baker
Worship Musicians: Cheryl Doty, Abby Worley & Sue Woods
Acolytes: Kate Thuma & Carter LaSota

Advent Two
Jerusalem: A Place of Waiting

We Set Off
(Gathering)

(Peace)

Welcome

Welcome to our KVOE listeners and to those watching online.
My name is **Jennifer Denton** and this morning I am your worship reader.
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

Light for the Journey
(Threshold Moment)

Jennifer Denton: On the way to Bethlehem, we travel to Jerusalem. The Temple is the site of the dramatic high point of Zechariah and Elizabeth's story of waiting so long for prayer to be answered. As Zechariah carries out priestly duties and Elizabeth waits outside with others, the usual and customary becomes anything but ordinary! An angelic messenger reveals a divine plan that leaves Zechariah literally speechless.

It feels poignant that this week we visit Jerusalem in our Advent story and the city is known as “the city of peace.” Certainly, we’ve been focused on the difficulties of prevailing peace in this turbulent part of the world even today. There is also the matter of our own “new Jerusalem” within. We wait for the day when we will feel more peace, have more peace, within ourselves. This week, we ask, “What are we waiting for?” and we learn that what happens within us *while* we wait is as important as the outcome. Can we be at peace—work for peace—“live peaceably”—even while waiting?

You are invited to rise in body and/or spirit as the first and second Advent candles are lit.

**O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.**

**We’re on our way
We’re on our way
Dream of the day
When [peace] holds sway
With all the earth
In all our hearts
We’re on our way
This is the day.**

Advent Candle Reader(s): Henrikson Family

Reader: The journey continues, and this candle will help light our way.

All: We are on our way to more peace.

Reader: Life is full of expectations and waiting for the right time,
the right answer, the right opportunity.

All: We are a people who wait for Good News.

Reader: It is hard to wait, but there are milestone moments
when we get a glimpse of what true peace feels like.

All: God’s light goes before us, we are not alone.

**We’re on our way
We’re on our way
Dream of the day
When [peace] holds sway
With all the earth
In all our hearts
We’re on our way
This is the day.**

Opening Prayer and Words of Assurance- Rev. Ross Baker

Holy and Living God, we pray to you in the midst of unanswered questions.
Often we are anxious and impatient as we desperately
want to know outcomes and chart our life's path with certainty.

Give us patience, God.

Call us to pause in peaceful surrender,
even and especially when the pieces of our lives
seem to be falling apart rather than getting put together.

Open our hearts to know your enduring presence
in this very moment, in this waiting.

We pray this in the name of your Son,
Jesus, the Christ, the Prince of Peace. **Amen.**

Let this be a marker of assurance that we are moving in a faithful direction:
God is with us every step of our way toward the Peace of Bethlehem.
Jesus is being born into our lives even now.
The Spirit is transforming us in this place.

Peace be with you!
And also with you.

As people forgiven and freed,
I invite you to pass the Peace of Christ among you
[and those worshiping remotely, we are glad you are on the journey with us!].

The Peace

Opening Hymn/Song

"People, Look East" UMH 202

First Scripture Reading- Jennifer Denton

Romans 12: 9-18

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Gospel Reading- Rev. Ross Baker

Luke 1: 5-17

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was descended from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly

according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

Once when he was serving as priest before God during his section's turn of duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to offer incense. Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified, and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

The Word in Music -

"O Come, All Ye Faithful" by **Sadie Chanley, Piano Solo**

"Twinkle, Twinkle Christmas Star" **Preschool-Kindergarten Children**

Children's Christmas Program

Journey to Bethlehem by Anna Laura Page & Jean Anne Shafferman (about 20 minutes)

Guided by Prayer

["Lead Me, Guide Me"](#) (chorus only) TFWS 2214

Rev. Amanda Baker: We begin our prayer time today remembering that when we need guidance the most, we can turn to God in prayer. Today we are guided by Peace.

**Lead me, guide me, along the way.
For if you lead me I cannot stray.
Lord, let me walk each day with you.
Lead me, O Lord, lead me.**

Rev. Amanda Baker: Let us pray:

God of Peace, we come to you today longing for your presence in our lives and with all those who suffer—in body, mind, or spirit. We pray this day for...

God of Peace, we come to you today so deeply grateful for celebrations, triumphs, and even small steps toward the lives we seek and the world we desire. We pray this day for...

Holy God, we know you are near. We know that every step along the way to Bethlehem in this Advent season is a step closer to renewed life in Jesus, the Christ. We know that your Spirit resides within us, growing day by day into the fullness of Peace. In this

moment, we pause in silence, marking your presence with awe and asking you to fill us and guide us, along our journey.

Moments of Silence

May we live by the prayer you taught us...

Lord's Prayer

Gifts Along the Way

Offering- Rev. Ross Baker

[Offertory Music: Elisha Sheffy-Harris, vocal]

Doxology

[to the tune of "Away in a Manger"]

**Praise God for these gifts that we offer today
and bless them for good in the world, this we pray.
Praise Jesus, the Christ-Child, our Hope and our Stay,
the Spirit, our Keeper, our Guide on the Way.**

Moving On
(Sending Forth)

Announcements- Rev. Amanda Baker

We Set Off: A Proclamation for the Continued Journey

Rev. Ross Baker: We have checked the signs and markers to make sure we are moving in a faithful direction. With renewed peace, we move on towards Bethlehem, knowing that the Light of Christ shines through the night. We are not alone. Our waiting is transforming us into those who know the gift of dependence on God. We release our expectations and open to new possibilities we have not imagined. Peace, not panic, perseveres.

Closing Hymn/Song

"Like A Child" TFWS #2092

Benediction- Rev. Ross Baker

And now as you go forth from this place,
know that all the places you encounter in the world
will contain signs and markers of God's work among us.

So keep your senses alert,
your perception wide,
and your heart open

to new discoveries along the way.

Sending Forth Song

O Holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray,
cast out our fear, and draw us near; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

We're on our way
We're on our way
Dream of the day
When [peace] holds sway
With all the earth
In all our hearts
We're on our way
This is the day.

Postlude