



The Fourth Sunday of Advent

PRELUDE

WELCOME

LIGHTING THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE

When the people were looking for deliverance, the prophet Micah declared, *"But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrata... from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days"* (Micah 5:2).

But what if Micah is also talking to us, proclaiming, "But you, O Maplewood Presbyterian Church, from you shall come forth for me..." What? What might God be calling forth from us?

Congregation:

God invites us to receive the promise of God's salvation and the sustenance of God's mercy and grace, enabling us to live in the promise as bearers of God's love to the world. As Christ was born in Bethlehem, so too we answer God's invitation to have Christ born among us today, and every day.

We light this candle of love as a sign of our commitment to live as people of God's promise, a promise of salvation and flourishing for all people, that springs forth from God's love for all creation.

HYMN #105 *People, Look East*

PRAYER OF PRAISE—written by Henri Nouwen

Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit
upon our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do
seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.
We who are anxious over many things
look forward to the peace of your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways
long for the fulfillment of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy
seek the joy of your presence.
We are your people,
walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.
To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

RESPONSE #110 *Love Has Come*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND REFLECTION

We hear that we are loved, but we struggle to receive it. We err on the side of fear and judgment rather than faith and love. We hear there is life abundant, but it sounds too good to be true and we don't believe it.
Forgive us when we choose darkness over light.
Have mercy on us when we choose judgment over love. Remind us that you hear our cry in the wilderness and we will be set on the path of life.

(time for silent prayers and reflection)

WORDS OF ASSURANCE—from Isaiah 40:1

"Comfort, comfort now my people, says your God."

Beloved, know this:
Your sins are forgiven.
The Lord, Emmanuel, abides with you.
The peace announced by the angels is at hand.

Thanks be to God!

PASSING THE PEACE

HYMN #93 *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates*

SPECIAL MUSIC *Mary Did You Know*
- Janie Lee Kelly, soloist

- David Little, piano

SCRIPTURE READINGS Luke 1:67-79 and Isaiah 60:1-5

MESSAGE Illumination

HYMN #247 *Now the Green Blade Rises*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your 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 our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory
now and forever. Amen.

HYMN #744 *Arise! Your Light Has Come*

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

