

Bower Hill Community Church (Presbyterian USA)  
Order for Worship ~ Third Sunday of Advent ~ "Joy Sunday" ~ 14 December 2025

Preparation for Worship:  
"Joy is the serious business of heaven."  
~C.S. Lewis

**Prelude**

*Prelude on "Picardy"*

Gilbert Martin

**Choral Introit**

*May I Be Empty*

**Call to Worship:**

Leader: Rejoice in the Lord always.

**People: Again, I will say, "Rejoice."**

Leader: Shout aloud and sing for joy!

**People: God is with us. The Lord is near.**

**Litany for Advent:**

O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, Sun of Justice: Come, shine on those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death.

**Come, Lord Jesus.**

O Ruler of the nations, Monarch for whom the people long, you are the cornerstone uniting all humanity: Come, save us all, whom you formed out of clay.

**Come, Lord Jesus.**

God of all generations, though signs and seasons change, your promise is faithful and your word will never pass away. Give us courage and strength as we watch and wait for Jesus Christ, our redeemer, who is coming in glory to reign.

**Amen.**

**Lighting of the Advent Candles**

Leader: On this third Sunday in Advent, we light the candle of joy. "The wilderness and dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom..."

**People: Like a crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing."**

**Prayer of Adoration**

God our Savior, your word shakes the wilderness, washes away evil, and causes all flesh to rejoice. Make us ready to greet you at the coming of your holy realm; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**\*Hymn 347**

*Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*

*Let all mortal flesh keep silence,  
and with fear and trembling stand;  
ponder nothing earthly minded,  
for with blessing in his hand  
Christ our God to earth descendeth,  
our full homage to demand.*

*King of kings, yet born of Mary,  
as of old on earth he stood,  
Lord of lords, in human vesture,  
in the body and the blood,  
he will give to all the faithful  
his own self for heavenly food.*

*Rank on rank the host of heaven  
spreads its vanguard on the way,  
as the Light of light descendeth  
from the realms of endless day,  
that the powers of hell may vanish  
as the shadows clear away.*

*At his feet the six-winged seraph,  
cherubim, with sleepless eye,  
veil their faces to the presence,  
as with ceaseless voice they cry,  
"Alleluia, alleluia,  
alleluia, Lord most high!"*

### **Call to Prayer**

There is a voice crying out in the wilderness of sin. God is calling to us with love. Let us confess our sin, trusting in God's saving grace.

### **Prayer of Confession**

**We confess, O God, that we are not prepared to welcome your way of righteousness, justice, and peace. You call us to repentance, but we refuse to change our ways. You call us to resist oppression, but we resign ourselves to evil. You call us to be reconciled, but we remain divided and afraid. Forgive us, God of grace. Pour out your Spirit in our lives so that we may be forgiven, set free, and made ready to meet you at the coming of your holy realm; through Jesus Christ our Lord.** [Silent prayers]

### **Words of Assurance**

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain made low, and the crooked made straight, and the rough made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. This is the good news we are waiting for: In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**\*The Gloria:** *Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

### **\*The Peace**

Leader: The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

**People: And also with you.**

Leader: Let us greet one another with the peace of Christ.

### **Prayer of Illumination**

Speak to us this day, O Lord. Visit us with your wisdom, overshadow us with your Spirit, and let it be with us according to your Word: Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

### **First Scripture Reading**

Isaiah 13:1-10

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

### **\*Hymn 96**

*On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry*

*On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry  
announces that the Lord is nigh;  
awake and hearken, for he brings  
glad tidings of the King of kings!*

*Then cleansed be every life from sin;  
make straight the way for God within,  
and let us all our hearts prepare  
for Christ to come and enter there.*

*We hail you as our Savior, Lord,  
our refuge and our great reward;  
without your grace we waste away  
like flowers that wither and decay.*

*Stretch forth your hand; our health restore,  
and make us rise to fall no more.*

*O let your face upon us shine  
and fill the world with love divine.*

**Second Scripture Reading**

Matthew 11:2-11

**Anthem**

*Advent Noel*

Anna L. Page and Jean A. Shafferman

**Sermon**

**“Still Waiting?”**

Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure

**Response**

*Amen*

**\*Affirmation of Faith**

“Credo for Christians”

**I worship and adore God, source, essence, and aim of all things,  
Spirit that enlivens all beings.**

**I follow the way of Jesus, who found God in himself  
and shared a way for others to find God in themselves.**

**He was born through love,**

**He lived for love,**

**He suffered for love,**

**He died for love,**

**But love never dies.**

**I submit myself to the leading of the love that is God,  
that I may be compassionate toward all beings,  
that I may live and serve in community with others,  
that I may ask for and offer forgiveness,  
that I may praise and enjoy God forever. Amen.**

**Offerings and Gifts of Self**

**Offertory**

*Ukrainian Bell Carol*

Schedryk Mykola Leontovych, arr. By Linda Sholes

**\*The Doxology: Hymn 606, 607**

*Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow*

Old Hundredth

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow! Praise God, all creatures here below!*

*Praise God above, ye heavenly host! Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost! Amen.*

*\*For a gender-neutral version, see hymn 607.*

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

**Sacrament of the Lord's Supper**

*Communion is served in the pews today. Please hold the bread until the minister gives the signal for everyone to partake at once. You may drink the cup whenever you like. Gluten and casein free bread is available upon request. Everyone is invited to receive communion without exception, and anyone is free to abstain.*

Leader: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

**People: We lift them up to the Lord.**

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

**The Sanctus: Hymn 565**

*Holy, Holy, Holy Lord*

Remain seated

*Holy, holy, holy Lord! God of power, God of might!*

*Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.*

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

*Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest!*

**Communion Music**

**Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer:**

**Our Father\* who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;**

**Thy kingdom come; thy 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 thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

\*Or "Mother" or "Parent"

## Welcome and Next Steps

### \*Closing Hymn 121

*O Little Town of Bethlehem*

*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.*

*For Christ is born of Mary  
and, gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the king,  
and peace to all on earth.*

*How silently, how silently,  
the wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
the blessings of his heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming,  
but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him, still  
the dear Christ enters in.*

*O holy child of Bethlehem,  
descend to us, we pray;  
cast out our sin and enter in;  
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!*

### \*Charge and Benediction

### \*Choral Response

*Alleluia*

### Postlude

Lift up Your Heads

Wilbur Held

*Feel free to exit during the postlude, mindful of those who wish to stay and listen.*