

# Joy

“The joy of the  
LORD is your  
strength.”

*Nehemiah 8:10, NIV*



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**

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*

**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 35:1-10*

Pew Bible Page 663

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**\*Hymn 96**

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

**Second Scripture Reading**

*Matthew 11:2-11*

Pew Bible Page 11

**Anthem**

*Advent Noel*

Anna L. Page and Jean A. Shafferman

**Sermon**

**“Still Waiting?”**

Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure

**Response 601**

*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*

#### \*Charge and Benediction

#### \*Choral Response 687

*Alleluia*

#### Postlude

*Lift up Your Heads*

Wilbur Held

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

**If you have a prayer request, please write it on the white prayer request card located in your pew.  
You may place it in the offering plate located in the narthex to be printed next week.  
Prayer concerns will remain in the bulletin for three weeks unless otherwise requested.**

### Prayers are requested for:

Matt Arner, Beverly Burke, Sophie Burke, Jennifer Dunn, Joseph Duchene, Bob Ferrero  
Nancy Green, , Sam Levine, Alex Lorber, Family of Robert Olinger  
Barb Oram, Mike Riemer, Antoinette Shanahan, Resa Walsh