

Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church

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Rev. M. Muriel Burrows, Pastor
Rev. Dr. Louise Johnson, Director of Christian Education
Patricia Fernández-Kelly, Lector

Beverly Owens, Music Director
Amy Shortt, Interim Organist
David Shedden, Seminary Intern

December 24, 2006

10:00 a.m.

Fourth Sunday of Advent: Love

*Enter Reverently, Meditate Quietly, Worship Devoutly,
Leave Gratefully, Serve Christ Faithfully*

PRELUDE

INTROIT

Surely the Presence

Wolfe

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CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The hope, the peace, the joy, and the love of God be with you all.

People: And also with you.

Leader: We gather to bless the Lord, our God, and to follow in the footsteps of our Savior.

People: Blessed be the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Leader: We gather to share the Word that our God has spoken, the word that gives life to all who believe in it and in the One to whom it points.

People: Blessed are they who trust in the promise of God and wait patiently for the revealing of the glory that is to be.

Leader: Our Savior comes! Even now the light of his presence shines in the darkness!

*OPENING HYMN

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

#9

LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE

THE CANDLE OF LOVE

Floyd Family

Reader: Last Sunday we lit the candle of joy. We light it and the candles of hope and peace again as we remember that Christ, who was born in Bethlehem, will come again to fulfill all God's promises and bring us everlasting peace and joy.

*** (Light the first three candles) ***

Reader: The fourth candle of Advent is the candle of love. God's love is a perfect love. It holds nothing back. God, in love, gives us everything we need to live a life of hope and peace.

Reader: The Bible says that *God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* Jesus shows us God's perfect love.

Reader: This is what love is like: love is patient, love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful or conceited, rude or selfish. Love is not quick to take offense, it keeps no record of wrongs; it does not gloat over other people's troubles, but rejoices in the right, the good, and the true. There is nothing that love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, to its hope, to its endurance.

Reader: Love never ends. We light the candle of love to remind us that Jesus brings us God's love and shows us how to love others.

*** (Light the fourth candle) ***

Reader: Love is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at this candle, we celebrate the love we find in Jesus Christ.

Reader: Let us pray: Thank you God for the love you give us. We ask that as we wait for all your promises to come true, and for Christ to come again, that you would remain present with us. Help us today and everyday to worship you, to hear your word, and to do your will by sharing your love with each other. We ask it in the name of the one who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.

ADVENT CANDLE SONG

A Candle Is Burning
by Sandra Dean, 1986

(tune: *Away in a Manger*)

**A Candle is burning, a Candle of Love,
A Candle to point us to heaven above,
A Baby for Christmas, a wonderful birth,
For Jesus is bringing God's love to our earth.**

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Leader: Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out to Mary, *Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.* Blessed are we, O God, for we too have been filled with the Holy Spirit and we have indeed been blessed by the fruit of Mary's womb, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

People: **Gracious and loving God, forgive us if we have allowed seasonal weariness to obscure the blessings and allowed Christmas festivities to crowd out the wonder of Christ's birth.**

HYMN *Born in the Night, Mary's Child* #30 (v.1)

Leader: And Mary said, *My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior....*

People: Forgive us if we magnify the prospect of summer holidays and activities more than we praise you, O God.

Leader: May the birth of Christ be our prime reason for rejoicing this Christmas.

People: Forgive us if our rejoicing excludes those who at this time feel rejected...unwanted...lonely.

HYMN *Born in the Night, Mary's Child* #30, (v.2)

Leader: And Mary said, *The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.*

People: Forgive us if our words and deeds offend the holiness of your name, O God.

Leader: Forgive us if our busyness leads us to forget the great things you have done for us, Mighty God, especially this great revelation of your love for us in Jesus Christ.

HYMN *Born in the Night, Mary's Child* #30, (v.3)

Leader: Mary spoke of God lifting up the poor and defenseless people of this world and bringing down those who are proud and arrogant and who abuse their positions of power.

People: Forgive us when we fail to bring love and mercy to birth in people's lives because of our pride and our arrogance.

Leader: Forgive our lack of commitment to condemn any power which leaves others powerless...or when we fail to confront and denounce any person who profits through the weakness or ignorance of others.

HYMN *Born in the Night, Mary's Child* #30, (v.4)

Leader: Mary spoke of the hungry being fed with good things and the rich being sent away empty.

People: Forgive us if our affluence blinds us to the plight of those people, young and old, in this country and in countries round about, who lack food and the basic necessities of life.

HYMN *Born in the Night, Mary's Child* #30, (v.1)

Leader: May our rejoicing over Christ's birth lead to our being generous to others, as God has been generous to us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Our rejoicing is certainly based on the generosity of God as we read in Hebrews that *it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all* (Hebrews 10:10). Rejoice then over this great good news that in Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

All: Thanks be to God.

*GLORIA PATRI (kids' pink page) #579

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WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

People: And also with you!

Leader: Let us offer each other a sign of peace!

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS GIFTS

SPECIAL MUSIC *Shepherd's Gloria* Summers

SCRIPTURE LESSON Luke 1:39-45 Page 57

SERMON *Celebration Time, Come On!* Rev. Muriel Burrows

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER (kids' orange page)

TITHES AND OFFERINGS *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.*

OFFERTORY

*DOXOLOGY (kids' red page) #592

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

All: Gracious God, we rejoice as we offer these gifts in response to the great things you have done for us. We give thanks especially for the great gift of your love clothed in human flesh. We pray that Jesus will be born anew into our hearts, and that the witness of our lives will convince others of the wonder and the miracle of Christmas. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

*HYMN *Angels We Have Heard on High* #23

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION

Christmas Wish

Wexler

- * Congregation stands
- ** Latecomers ushered in

ANNOUNCEMENTS



WELCOME - The Pastor, Elders and Deacons of Witherspoon welcome most warmly all worshipers. Our fellowship is enriched by your presence. If you do not have a church home of your own, we do sincerely invite you to be a part of our fellowship. Please contact the church office for further information if you are interested in church membership (609-924-1666 or witherspoon@verizon.net).



SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR ALL AGE GROUPS! Adults will meet on their own schedule each month in the Fellowship Hall at 9:00 a.m. All other Sunday school classes for students in grades 1-12 begin immediately after the children's message in morning worship. (A nursery is available for children in preschool and kindergarten.)

NURSERY CARE is provided for children 0-5 beginning at 9:45 a.m. Today Louise Johnson is assisting with nursery care; next Sunday's nursery care will be assisted by Jasmine McEwen.

FLOWERS - If you would like to provide flowers in honor or memory of a loved one, or simply to beautify the church, please sign up on the chart located on the door of the sound room (left-hand entrance from the sanctuary to the parish house). After worship service, the donor may take the flowers home. At present, it is the responsibility of the person giving the flowers to make his/her own arrangements for preparation and delivery of the flowers for the Chancel. The next available date is December 31.

USHERS for this morning's service are Robert Ellis and Curtis Johnson. Next week's ushers are Joyce Abbott and Joan Tomlin.



COFFEE HOUR - Please join us for a Coffee Hour in the Fellowship Hall following this morning's worship service. Host for the month of December is Vicki Meisel. Anyone who wishes to contribute to the Coffee Hour should contact Vicki (609-637-9417).

LECTIONARY TEXT for next Sunday, December 31, is 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52.

ATTENDANCE at the service of December 17 was 113.



STAY IN TOUCH – Shirley Ellis is quite ill; her cancer has returned. She is staying with her daughter and would appreciate hearing from her Witherspoon family at the following address: c/o Joanne Glen, 84 Yantacaw Brook Road, Montclair, NJ 07043. You may also call Shirley (973-783-3174).



MANY THANKS – Rev. Burrows, members and friends of Witherspoon, many thanks to you all for your prayers and your many ways of showing kindness and care during my time in the hospital and recovery. I wish you blessings and happiness this Christmas and in the New Year. Love, Alice Satterfield



2006 WSPC ADVENT GIVING PROJECT is the International AIDS Ministry Early Learning Centers in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. This PC(USA) sponsored program is being developed to establish Early Learning Centers for children ages 5-12 orphaned by AIDS and the ongoing civil war in the Congo.

These children have critical health, education and care needs. It is important to note that every dollar raised for this effort will be matched by a special UN fund set up for this purpose. A project of the Peacemaking and Social Justice Ministry, this offering will be collected **today**. Please give generously to this critical need. (Special envelopes will be provided.)



FOOD DONATIONS FOR CRISIS MINISTRY – The Deacons are collecting nourishing food for the Crisis Ministry. *****NO GLASS JARS, PLEASE.***** Checks made payable to the Crisis Ministry are always welcome and may be placed in the offering plate or given to a deacon. Please consider an extra purchase during your next grocery shopping trip and place items in the wooden box in the Narthex.



OFFICE HOURS – The Church Secretary will **not** be in the office this week, but will return to the office on Tuesday, January 2. She will work at home as needed, checking church e-mail and telephone for messages.



STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN – Offering envelopes for 2007 are in and available for pick up from the table in the Fellowship Hall. There are still a number of members and friends who have not submitted a pledge card for next year. This process is crucial for the development of the church budget and the overall financial plan for the future. Extra cards may be obtained from a member of the committee or the Stewardship mailbox.



KWANZAA AT WITHERSPOON – Once again, it’s time to celebrate *Kwanzaa* at Witherspoon. **All** are invited to join the fun **this Friday, December 29**, at 6:30 p.m. at the church building. Recognizing and celebrating *Kwanzaa* should have a special place in our hearts as the first fruits of the harvest spark a way for new beginnings and the seven principles guide and inspire us as we enter 2007. Anyone who is willing to help or donate may contact: Barbara Flythe (732-274-9435), Grace Kimbrough (609-386-1410), and Shirley Satterfield (609-924-2010). The event is again being sponsored by the Junior Usher Ministry and the Peacemaking and Social Justice Ministry.



2007 ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING – The *Annual Congregational Meeting* will immediately follow the service on **Sunday, January 28**. ***Please note*** that all committee chairs and ministry leaders should **submit** their **reports** for inclusion in the Annual Report to the church office **no later than Sunday, January 14**, to allow adequate time for preparation. Your assistance is appreciated.



Trenton Area
Habitat
for Humanity®

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY WORK WEEK – Our Habitat for Humanity project needs your help. To participate, please contact Meg Coghlan (609-651-2945 or meg_coghlan@yahoo.com).