

Lake Merritt United Methodist Church



An Inclusive Christian Community of Oakland

Sustaining a vibrant and growing congregation through Christian spiritual transformation, making our work and the church relevant and visible.

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LIVESTREAM WORSHIP SERVICE



“I Believe in the Sun: Hope for Tomorrow”

Lake Merritt United Methodist Church celebrates the longer 7-week season of Advent its historic length, as do many churches in the United States and other parts of the world.

Rev. Pamela Kurtz, *Pastor*
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Sunday, November 22, 2020
Second Sunday of Advent
Celebration of Divine Worship

WELCOME

MOMENT OF SILENCE

INTROIT

I Believe Even When

W&M: Mark Miller

LMUMC Voice Choir feat. Phyllis Elving

*I believe in the sun, I believe in the sun,
even when, even when it's not shining. (2x)*

OPENING PRAYER [responsive]:

The place without light

The place without light

The depth of night

The depth of night

The pit of unknowing

The pit of unknowing

Holy One,

we thank you for the glimpses we catch
of your gift of untiring hope.

Even in the midst of fear,
of challenge, of struggle—

even when our view is obscured

by clouds of doubt,

ignite the flame of hope within us,

... that we might glow with its brilliance from the inside out.

I believe in the sun,

I believe in the sun,

even when... even when...

it's not shining.

Help us face this bleak night of the soul
and embrace it as a womb of rebirth.

1. *Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.*
2. *Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.*

READING OF SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 40: 1-11; Mark 1: 1-15 (CEB)

Phyllis Elving, Linda Weingarten

Comfort, comfort my people! says your God.

Speak compassionately to Jerusalem,

and proclaim to her that her compulsory service has ended,
that her penalty has been paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand
double for all her sins!

A voice is crying out: "Clear the Lord's way in the desert!

Make a level highway in the wilderness for our God!

Every valley will be raised up, and every mountain and hill will be flattened.

Uneven ground will become level, and rough terrain a valley plain.

The Lord's glory will appear, and all humanity will see it together;

the Lord's mouth has commanded it."

A voice was saying: "Call out!"

And another said, "What should I call out?"

All flesh is grass; all its loyalty is like the flowers of the field.

The grass dries up and the flower withers

when the Lord's breath blows on it. Surely the people are grass.

The grass dries up; the flower withers, but our God's word will exist forever.

Go up on a high mountain, messenger Zion!

Raise your voice and shout, messenger Jerusalem!

Raise it; don't be afraid;

say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

Here is the Lord God, coming with strength,

with a triumphant arm, bringing his reward with him
and his payment before him.

Like a shepherd, God will tend the flock; he will gather lambs in his arms
and lift them onto his lap. He will gently guide the nursing ewes.

(Mark's genesis story of Jesus)

The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, God's Son, happened just as it was written about in the prophecy of Isaiah:

*Look, I am sending my messenger before you.
He will prepare your way, a voice shouting in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight."*

John the Baptist was in the wilderness calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. Everyone in Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to the Jordan River and were being baptized by John as they confessed their sins. John wore clothes made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. He announced, "One stronger than I am is coming after me. I'm not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

About that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. While he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw heaven splitting open and the Spirit, like a dove, coming down on him. And there was a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."

At once the Spirit forced Jesus out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among the wild animals, and the angels took care of him.

After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news, saying, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!"

SERMON

"I Believe in the Sun: Hope for Tomorrow"

Rev. Pamela Kurtz, *Pastor*

HYMN OF REFLECTION

I Believe

W&M: Mark Miller

LMUMC Quartet

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Pastor: "Lord,"

People: "Hear our Prayers."

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**We invite you to use any other name to refer to the Divine with which you are comfortable ~ God, Father, Mother, Creator, etc.*

*Our *Creator in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and
forever. Amen.*

OFFERING OUR GIFTS TO GOD

Please prepare your checks for mailing, or cash for drop off at the church office while our Music Director leads us in our Thanksgiving Song.

THANKSGIVING SONG **We Believe** (sung to 'Give Thanks') TFWS 2036
*Believe, with a hopeful heart!
Believe, and shine your light!
Believe, because the song we sing is sung for all!
And now let the weak say, "I am strong;"
let the poor say, "I am rich
because of what our God has done for us."
Believe!*

SPECIAL SONG **Emmanuel, Emmanuel**
LMUMC Chimes

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION & RESOLVE [*responsive*]

In times when humanity disappoints,
perhaps when even our own thoughts and behaviors disappoint,
it is an important act to call out, name and claim, the consequences of our
wrongs.

And in times of distress it is a prophetic act to call out,
name and claim, our belief in the hope for tomorrow.

I believe that we have looked the other way too many times.

I believe that we are capable of facing reality and working for change.

I believe that our fear of difference has robbed us of compassion.

I believe that we can look deeper and hold onto the things that we have in
common.

I believe that our fear of doubt makes us stop asking tough questions.
I believe that asking tough questions in the face of injustice is faithful.

We believe, even when we are discouraged.

We believe, that when we are discouraged,
raising our voices for justice will offer us hope!

TIME OF SILENCE FOR PRAYERS OF FORGIVENESS & HOPE

ASSURANCE OF GRACE [*responsive*]:

"Comfort, O comfort my people," says our God.

You have served your term. Your penalty is paid.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven! Amen!

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

As forgiven people living in anticipation of Jesus's coming, let us share peace with our siblings in the world.

*We go to our windows and doors and share with The world:
"the peace of Christ be with you!"*

GRATITUDE TIMES

CLOSING SONG

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

words: Longfellow, music: Johnny Marks

*1. I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play
And mild and sweet their songs repeat
Of peace on earth good will to all*

*2. I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along th'unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to all.*

*3. And in despair I bowed my head
There is no peace on earth I said
For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to all*

*4. Then pealed the bells more loud and deep
God is not dead, nor does he sleep
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail
With peace on earth, good will to all*

*5. Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good will to all.*

BENEDICTION

I invite you to light your candle for the Benediction:

We light the Advent candles against the winter night,
not “because of,” or “during,” but “against,”
reminding us that the light of Advent,
like the light of Christ, is a veritable protest to and resistance of
the darkness that gathers all around us.

And so, my friends, like bells ringing out the news
that the sun still shines even on cloudy days,
fill the night left by sadness with messages of hope.

Go into your lives humming the tunes that keep that hope alive in you
and that spur you on in your work of justice and reconciliation.

Raise your voices and repeat after me...

“do not be afraid!”

“do not be afraid!”

Amen!

POSTLUDE

I Believe Even When

LMUMC Chimes Choir