

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 God: Ode to Joy”

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*
Joan Miller, *Music Director*
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Sunday, December 6, 2020
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Celebration of Divine Worship

WELCOME

MOMENT OF SILENCE

INTROIT

I Believe

W&M: Mark Miller

LMUMC Voice Choir feat. Linda Weingarten

*I believe in God, I believe in God,
even when, even when God is silent. (2x)*

OPENING PRAYER [responsive]:

The loneliness of fear

The loneliness of fear

The invisibility of the next steps

The invisibility of the next steps

The yearning for presence

The yearning for presence

Holy One,

we thank you for the glimpses we catch
of your gift of the depths of joy.

Even in the midst of fear, of challenge, of struggle-
even when we are not sure of your presence,
ignite the flame of love within us,

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

*I believe in God,
I believe in God,
even when... even when...
God is silent.*

Help us face the silence of unknowing
and embrace it as the pregnant pause
before joyful new beginnings.

OPENING SONG

Hail to the Lord's Anointed

UMH 203

Joan Miller, Music Director

1. *Hail to the Lord's Anointed, great David's greater Son!
Hail in the time appointed, his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free;
to take away transgression, and rule in equity.*
2. *He comes with succor speedy to those who suffer wrong;
to help the poor and needy, and bid the weak be strong;
to give them songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light,
whose souls, condemned and dying, are precious in his sight.*
3. *He shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth;
love, joy, and hope, like flowers, spring in his path to birth.
Before him on the mountains, shall peace, the herald, go,
and righteousness, in fountains, from hill to valley flow.*
4. *To him shall prayer unceasing and daily vows ascend;
his kingdom still increasing, a kingdom without end.
The tide of time shall never his covenant remove;
his name shall stand forever; that name to us is love.*

READING OF SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 57:14-19; Luke 1:26-56 (CEB)

Dan Strauss & Linda Weingarten

It will be said: "Survey, survey; build a road!

Remove barriers from my people's road!"

The one who is high and lifted up, who lives forever, whose name is holy, says:

I live on high, in holiness,

and also with the crushed and the lowly,

reviving the spirit of the lowly,

reviving the heart of those who have been crushed.

I won't always accuse, nor will I be enraged forever.

It is my own doing that their spirit is exhausted —

I gave them breath!

I was enraged about their illegal profits;

I struck them; in rage I withdrew from them.

Yet they went on wandering wherever they wanted.

I have seen their ways, but I will heal them.

I will guide them, and reward them with comfort.

And for those who mourn,

I will create reason for praise:

utter prosperity to those far and near,

and I will heal them, says the Lord.

(Luke's genesis story of Jesus)

When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary.

When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?"

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son. Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible for God."

Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her."

Mary said,

"With all my heart I glorify the Lord!

In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.

He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.

Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored
because the mighty one has done great things for me.

Holy is his name.

He shows mercy to everyone,
from one generation to the next,
who honors him as God.

He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty-handed.

He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,
remembering his mercy,
just as he promised to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months, and then returned to her home.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus
LMUMC Chimes Choir

SERMON

"I Believe in God: Ode to Joy"

Rev. Pamela Kurtz, Pastor

HYMN OF REFLECTION

We Resist

LMUMC Choir
W&M: Mark Miller

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!*

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 promise of joy.

Hear these statements of belief from members of our own congregation:

I believe that we have sometimes been silent in the face of injustice AND
I believe that we are capable of raising our voices and insisting on goodness
for all.

**I believe that we have been afraid of feeling deeply, making our joy small
AND**

I believe that the deep joy of community can always be present,
even in hard times.

I believe that sometimes we wonder if we can make a difference AND
I believe that small acts of kindness and help do make a real difference.

We believe, even when we are discouraged.

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

TIME OF SILENCE FOR PRAYERS OF FORGIVENESS & HOPE

ASSURANCE OF GRACE *[responsive]:*

Hear the Good News my siblings: When we rise up and speak our
brokenness to God, God forgives our silence and inaction. Renewed with
the courage of God, we go to share the Good News that God is not silent
against oppression and darkness; God is in our resistance and defiance
which brings about God's justice and joy.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we 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 **Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee** UMH 89

[verses 2-4 written by British punk rock star, *Billy Bragg*]

1. *Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before thee, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt away.
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!*
2. *See now like a Phoenix rising from the rubble of the war
hope of ages manifested peace and freedom evermore.
Brothers, sisters stand together, raise your voices now as one.
Though by history divided, reconciled in unison.*
3. *Throw off now the chains of ancient bitterness and enmity.
And in hand let's walk together on the path of liberty.
Hark...a new dawn is breaking; raise your voices now as one.
Though by history divided, reconciled in unison.*
4. *What's to be then all my brothers, sisters; what is in your hearts?
Tell me now the hopes you harbour, what's the task and where to start.
Those speak ten million voices; every word is understood.
Furnish every heart with joy and banish all hatred for good.*

BENEDICTION

Pastor: I invite you to light your candle and hold it high for the Benediction:
We wait for justice but we do not wait to work for change;
We wait for restored health but we do not wait to work to heal;
We wait for wholeness but we do not wait to work at binding brokenness;

We wait for peace but we do not wait to work to eliminate hatred.
And so, my friends, like bells ringing out the news that God is ever-present
with us,
fill the night left by sadness with messages of joy.
Go into your lives humming the tunes that keep that joy 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
LMUMC Chimes Choir