

WORSHIP HANDOUT  
Sunday December 11<sup>th</sup>  
Third Sunday of Advent  
Communion  
Series: From Generation to Generation



OPENING OF WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

ADVENT WELCOME From Generation to Generation, vs. 3

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

\*HYMN God Almighty, We Are Waiting, vs. 3 W&S #3047

\*CALL TO CONFESSION

A series of experiments by Princeton psychologists, Janine Willis and Alexander Todorov, taught the world that it only takes a tenth of a second for us to form an impression of a stranger. In other words, it only takes a tenth of a second for us to look at someone's face and determine a stereotype about who they are.

With decisions happening that quickly, it is not hard to imagine why we might need this moment of confession.

The prayer of confession is an opportunity to slow down. We take that tenth of a second and give it room to breathe. We reflect on the decisions that we've made this past week and we ask for God's mercy to be in all of them.

And without fail, God wiggles God's self into the cracks of our lives, and we are made better for it. So with that confidence, let us go to God in prayer:

**\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**God of mercy,  
a million times a day we have the opportunity to be gracious,  
to assume the best in others,  
to give the benefit of the doubt.  
A million times a day we could choose the better way,  
but so often we don't.  
Fear and greed kick in.  
Assumptions and insecurities take the wheel.  
Comparison and critique lead the charge.  
Forgive us for forgetting that we are descendants of Joseph.  
Forgive us for forgetting that grace and mercy are in our  
blood.  
Forgive us for forgetting that all belong to you.  
Give us the courage to love even bigger than before,  
and the wisdom to choose a better way.  
Amen.**

**\*WORDS OF FORGIVENESS**

Family of Faith, hear this good news:  
We who have chosen wrong, are given a second chance.  
We who have lost our way, are welcomed into community.  
We who feel alone, are seen, held, and known.  
This is the good news of the gospel.  
No matter how many times we choose wrong or lose our way,  
God continues to be a God of second chances, community, and love.  
Thanks be to God! Amen.

**\*HYMN God Almighty, We Are Waiting, vs. 1,2 W&S #3047**

**SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION**

SONG AS CHILDREN GATHER Away in a Manger, vs. 3 UMH #217

## CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

### UNISON PRAYER

Holy God,

scripture tells us that you came to Joseph through an angel—  
loud and clear, impossible to miss.

Scripture also tells us that Joseph listened.

He rearranged his life to follow your invitation.

God, we long for that—  
all of that.

We long to hear your voice—loud and clear, impossible to miss.

We long for invitations to something more, something deeper.

And we long to be like Joseph and find the courage to follow.

So clean out our ears. Brush the dust off our hearts.

Trace us back to our roots—back to Joseph—who heard and followed.

With gratitude we listen.

Amen.

### TIME OF PRAYER

#### PASTORAL AND SILENT PRAYER (MUSIC)

#### 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory now and forever. Amen.

HYMN: O Little Town of Bethlehem, vs. 1,3,4 UMH #230

### OFFERTORY

**\*DOXOLOGY**

UMH #95

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.

**\*UNISON PRAYER**

Almighty God,  
giver of every good and perfect gift,  
teach us to give to you all that we have and all that we are,  
that we may praise you not with our words only,  
but with our whole lives.

**LESSON I                    Isaiah 35:1-10 CEB**

**The desert and the dry land will be glad;  
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom like the crocus.**

**<sup>2</sup> They will burst into bloom,  
and rejoice with joy and singing.**

**They will receive the glory of Lebanon,  
the splendor of Carmel and Sharon.**

**They will see the Lord's glory,  
the splendor of our God.**

**<sup>3</sup> Strengthen the weak hands,  
and support the unsteady knees.**

**<sup>4</sup> Say to those who are panicking:**

**“Be strong! Don't fear!**

**Here's your God,**

**coming with vengeance;**

**with divine retribution**

**God will come to save you.”**

**<sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf will be cleared.**

<sup>6</sup> Then the lame will leap like the deer,  
and the tongue of the speechless will sing.  
Waters will spring up in the desert,  
and streams in the wilderness.

<sup>7</sup> The burning sand will become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground, fountains of water.  
The jackals' habitat, a pasture;  
grass will become reeds and rushes.

<sup>8</sup> A highway will be there.  
It will be called **The Holy Way**.  
The unclean won't travel on it,  
but it will be for those walking on that way.

Even fools won't get lost on it;  
<sup>9</sup> no lion will be there,  
and no predator will go up on it.  
None of these will be there;  
only the redeemed will walk on it.

<sup>10</sup> The Lord's ransomed ones will return and enter Zion with  
singing,  
with everlasting joy upon their heads.  
Happiness and joy will overwhelm them;  
grief and groaning will flee away.

**May God add a blessing to this reading.**

\*HYMN      Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus      UMH 196

\*LESSON 2      Matthew 1:18-25      CEB

<sup>8</sup> This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. When Mary his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn't want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly. <sup>20</sup> As he was

thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup> Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled:

<sup>23</sup> *Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son,  
And they will call him, Emmanuel.*

(Emmanuel means “God with us.”)

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he didn’t have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. Joseph called him Jesus.

L: This is the Word of God for all people.

**P: Thanks be to God.**

MESSAGE                      We Can Choose a Better Way

\*HYMN                         A Better Way, by Anna Strickland

\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**We believe in a God who offers second chances  
and does not hold grudges.**

**We believe in a God who opens the door to new life  
and leaves the porch light on for us when we get lost.**

**We believe in a God who believes in us—  
believes that we can make a difference,  
that we can choose grace over comparison,  
love over hate,  
peace over war.**

**And so we strive to live our lives in love.**

**We strive to listen as Joseph listened,**

**and to be the people that God calls us to be.  
It's all that easy, and it's all that hard.  
This we believe. Amen.**

**\*AFFIRMATION RESPONSE      From Generation to Generation, vs. 3**

**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE**