

Order of Service for the Public Worship of God

Third Sunday of Advent ~ December 16, 2007 Eleven O'clock, A.M.

Pastor: Rev. Dr. James E. Swanson Liturgist: Orville Nicholas
Organist & Choir Director: Miss Beverly Antis

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THE SERVICE OF WORSHIP BEGINS WITH THE MUSIC OF THE ORGAN

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THE PRELUDE *Watchman* Peter Pindar Stearns

THE CHORAL INTROIT *The King Shall Come* CONSOLATION

*THE PROCESSIONAL HYMN 13

Prepare the Way BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN

*THE PRAYER OF ADORATION

LIGHTING OF THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE

Leanne & Bob Heaton, Bob Hogg

(As the third candle is lighted, those lighting will say,)

“We light this candle as a sign of the coming light of Christ. Advent means coming. We are preparing ourselves for the days ahead.”

(The congregation will say,)

“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. Let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

PRAYER

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

VENI EMMANUEL

*O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight,
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

THE CALL TO CONFESSION

THE CORPORATE PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God of Life, we have bruised your Spirit in our living, damaged the world given in trust, called into question the relationships of life, and tarnished the image in which we were made. Spirit of life and love, forgive us.

Patient and loving Father, we have not walked worthily in the faith, sought justice, loved mercy or walked humbly with you. We have not followed the pattern of Christ's life nor always loved our neighbor as ourselves.

Forgive us, God, and teach us to forgive one another, so that by your grace this world, and we ourselves, may be transformed.

Now hear us as we pray...

A TIME FOR SILENT CONFESSION

THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Pastor: Hear the gracious words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "To all who truly repent, your sins are forgiven; take up your cross and follow me."
Friends, this is good news!

People: **In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!**

*THE GLORIA PATRI 579

Gloria Patri

*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

from "*The Confession of 1967*"

God's sovereign love is a mystery beyond the reach of the human mind. Human thought ascribes to God superlatives of power, wisdom, and goodness. But God reveals divine love in Jesus Christ by showing power in the form of a servant, wisdom in the folly of the cross, and goodness in receiving sinful men and women. The power of God's love in Christ to transform the world discloses that the Redeemer is the Lord and Creator who made all things to serve the purpose of God's love.

The kingdom represents God's triumph over all that resists the divine will and disrupts God's creation. Already God's reign is present as a ferment in the world, stirring hope in all people and preparing the world to receive its ultimate judgment and redemption. With an urgency born of this hope, the church applies itself to present tasks and strives for a better world. It does not identify limited progress with the kingdom of God on earth, nor does it despair in the face of disappointment and defeat. In steadfast hope, the church looks beyond all partial achievement to the final triumph of God.

*THE GREETINGS OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP

THE CHILDREN'S SERMON

THE SHARING OF JOYS, CONCERNS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE CHORAL PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Creator of the Stars of Night Sarum Plainsong, 9th C.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Isaiah 35:1-10 (*Pew Bible p. 629*)

Liturgist: This is the word of the Lord. All: **Thanks be to God!**

THE ANTHEM

A Voice in the Desert

Ronald A. Nelson

*The voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord.
Ev'ry valley will be raised up, and ev'ry mountain be made low.
And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed to all the world.
Prepare the way of the Lord.*

THE EPISTLE LESSON James 5:7-10 *(Pew Bible p. 215)*

Liturgist: Here ends the reading of the Epistle. All: **Praise be to you, O Lord.**

*THE GOSPEL LESSON Matthew 11:2-11 *(Pew Bible p. 10)*

Pastor: The Gospel of our Lord. All: **Glory to You, O Christ.**

*THE CONGREGATIONAL CANTICLE

Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus HYFRYDOL

**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.**

THE SERMON “ *ADVENT GOSSIP* ” Dr. Swanson

THE PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER (using “debts” and “debtors”)

THE THREE-FOLD AMEN Marty Haugen

THE PRESENTATION OF TITHES, OFFERINGS, AND GIFTS

THE OFFERTORY ANTHEM *Come Rejoice, Believers* Dietrich Buxtehude

*Come rejoice, rejoice, believers.
The watchman high now loudly sings the joyful tidings.
The Bridegroom comes, the feast awaits;
Believers rise; make joy to Him.
Let your lights in beauty shine, the Bridegroom comes. Arise!
He comes, the Bridegroom comes. The Lord is He, Emanuel.
Rejoice, rejoice, the Savior comes.*

*THE ADVENT DOXOLOGY - Hymn 36, vs. 4 CRANHAM

***What can I give Him, Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part.
Yet what I can I give Him, Give my heart.***

*THE UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**The light and truth you send upon us are the greatest gifts we can know,
O God. How can we do less than rejoice, give thanks, and dedicate these tithes
and offerings to you? Give us grace to reflect your glory in this season of
expectation, and use our gifts for the building of your kingdom here and now.
Amen.**

*THE RECESSIONAL HYMN 11

O Lord, How Shall I Meet You? VALET ICH WILL DIR GEBEN

*THE BENEDICTION

*THE CHORAL RESPONSE *Eternal Light, Shine in My Heart* Jane M. Marshall

*THE TIME OF SILENCE

*THE CHARGE AND DISMISSAL

Pastor: Let us go in eager expectation of the in-breaking day of the Lord with all its fullness and peace.

Wait and watch, pray and work, for such is the calling of faith.

People: **We will not grow weary, but urge one another on with words of hope and encouragement.**

Pastor: Then go in peace! Serve the Lord!

People: **Thanks be to God!**

THE POSTLUDE *Come Redeemer of Mankind* Johann Pachelbel

*Those who are able, please stand.

GREETINGS TO ALL this day who have come to worship. We want to get to know you, especially if you are a visitor!

Please introduce yourself to others sitting nearby during the passing of the peace. Following the worship, everyone is invited to share a time of coffee, tea and fellowship downstairs in the Assembly Room. (exit at the rear of the sanctuary, go down the stairs and past the Library to the entrance near the Sallman painting of Christ knocking at the door.)

THE POINSETTIAS in the Sanctuary are given by members and friends in honor or in memory of Loved Ones. A complete list of donors will be published in the Christmas Eve bulletin.

YOU WERE GREETED TODAY by Donna Hobaugh.

THE USHERS: Nancy and David Blewett

FELLOWSHIP HOUR immediately follows this worship service downstairs in the Assembly Room. Everyone is cordially invited to attend. Hosting today's Fellowship Hour is Donna Hobaugh.

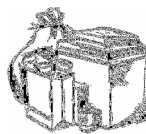
Covenant Cupboard:

December - noodles or tuna

Baskets for your donations are located in the front hallway.

Monetary donations are always appreciated and needed.

Please make checks payable to Covenant Cupboard.



Special Session Meeting Today: Attention Elders, a meeting of the Session of Covenant Presbyterian Church will be held in the Connell Room following this morning's worship service.

SEEKERS ADVENT SERIES

During the Sundays of December, the Seekers Adult Sunday School Class will again be privileged to hear Dr. Kang Yup Na, associate professor in the Department of Religion, History, Philosophy, and Classics at Westminster College, New Wilmington, Pa.



Dr. Na will be teaching on "Parables in Luke 15."

Seekers meet each Sunday morning at 9:45 a.m. in the Assembly Room. Coffee, tea and a snack are available before each class.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MICHAEL DESNOYERS

Michael, Covenant Choir's Tenor Section Leader, graduated yesterday, December 15th from Slippery Rock University with a 4.0 and 174 credits. He will be receiving two degrees: Bachelor of Music in Music Education and Bachelor of Music in Music Performance. Michael was selected to be the student marshal at the College of Humanities and Fine and Performing Arts. He will also be singing the National Anthem and Alma Mater. Michael hopes to substitute teach for the time being and he plans to start graduate school in the Fall of 2008 at an undecided school.



CHRISTMAS EVE READERS REHEARSAL

A rehearsal for readers will be held on Thursday, December 20 at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Readers are reminded to bring their lesson with them. If any reader is unable to attend the rehearsal, please contact the church office to arrange a convenient time to rehearse.

Lesson 1	Karen DeLorenzo
Lesson 2	Samantha Drohan
Lesson 3	John Reefer
Lesson 4	Ann Morrison
Lesson 5	Kathy Martynuska
Lesson 6	Orville Nicholas
Lesson 7	Mary Lee Marten
Lesson 8	Larry Morrison
Lesson 9	Pastor Jim

***Please Note:** Our apologies. The order of the readers and lessons in the Christmas edition of the Covenant Chronicle was printed in error. The correct order for the readers and their corresponding lesson assignments is listed on the left.

GIVE A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING!

This season, consider giving a "gift" to the hungry of our Butler community with a donation to the ongoing **Covenant Community Dinner Fund**. It is anticipated that the increased numbers being fed by Covenant and Faith Church volunteers on the 4th Wednesday of each month will continue or grow even more during the winter months. *See the special insert in today's bulletin.* A very attractive "Gift Certificate" has been designed by Betty Anderson's grandchildren, SuLing and Grace (Lonnie Sue's children). Place your order today!

Your gift of \$25 would feed one hungry person for a whole year at our 4th Wednesday kitchen ministry. Any amount would be helpful!

Christmas Eve ~ Monday, December 24th

7:00 pm Pre-Service Music

Instrumentals featuring

The Brass Sextet of Slippery Rock University

Miss Beverly Antis, Organ

Miss Sarah Morrison, Cello

Mr. Larry Morrison, Classical Guitar and Recorder

7:30 pm Worship Service

“THE SERVICE OF LESSONS & CAROLS”

(based on the traditional service of Kings College, England)
with Communion and Candlelighting



GRADUATION TIME!

Taylor Ann Gall, daughter of Melinda Gall, graduated from Slippery Rock University on December 15th with a Bachelor of Science in Communication-Journalism. Taylor's goal is to pursue a career in radio. Congratulations Taylor and God's guidance and blessings in your future endeavors.

Advent Choir Rehearsals:

The Covenant Choir will rehearse in the Sanctuary on Thursdays from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm (a half-hour earlier). This time schedule will continue through December.

In The Life of Our Church

Prayer Concerns:

- Bill Wilson At Harmarville Rehabilitation Center, with a target date of Dec 28 to move to skilled care home
- Rogelio Guimong Shari Swanson's father in Manila, Phillipines improving, tumor may respond to medication
- Karen Swanson Knee surgery postponed until early 2008
- Bob and Joan Moore In the nursing home (Concordia at Rebecca)
- Mary Elizabeth Goehring In the nursing home (Concordia)
- Julie and Bud Bruno For improved strength and health (at home)

Joys:

- Ann Morrison - recuperating from successful eye surgery on Dec 10
- Phyllis Thoma - improvement, driving, getting around more

Birthdays:

- Samantha Drohan - December 16
- Kathy Martynuska - December 21
- Virginia Thompson - December 22

“Thoughts from the Early Church”
GOSPEL COMMENTARY by THOMAS OF VILLANOVA*

Are you the one who is to come, or are we to look for someone else?

The gospel narrative tells of a question which John the Baptist, who was in prison, put to the Lord through his disciples. “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to look for someone else?” John himself was in no doubt about the matter. Even from his mother’s womb he had recognized Jesus, and at the Jordan he had borne his testimony; but he sent this embassy for two reasons.

In the first place, John wished to instruct his disciples. He knew that his own death was imminent and, like the good leader and teacher he was, he made provision for his disciples, to ensure that they would have a teacher and protector. He wanted to see them safe under Christ’s wing and in his care.

John’s second and paramount motive, however, was to draw attention to Christ. He knew that he had been sent to bear witness to Christ, and although he had given his testimony at the Jordan, few had accepted it. Knowing now that his death was near he devised a profitable and very prudent plan: he would put this question to Jesus publicly and thus bring him into the limelight, so that in replying to the question Jesus would at the same time bear witness about himself.

John knew that the Lord’s reply was bound to be very fruitful, and events proved him right. The disciples approached Jesus, and in front of the crowd put to him the same question which the Jews had put to John. Everyone eagerly awaited his reply, for there had already been a rumor among the people that he might indeed be the Messiah. The Lord gave no immediate answer, but delayed a little, and in their presence worked wonderful, mighty miracles.

Then Jesus told them, “Go and report to John what you have learned: The blind are receiving their sight, the lame are walking, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.” He did not give an answer to them in so many words, but pointed to his deeds, as much as to say, “The works that I am doing are my witness. Judge for yourself.”

Isaiah had uttered three prophecies about Christ who would come into the world. (1) “Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unsealed and the lame man will leap like a hart.” (2) “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... he has sent me to announce good tidings to the poor.” and (3) “He will be a stone for stumbling over, and a rock of scandal as well, for both houses of Israel.”

The Lord fulfilled these prophecies before their eyes, and implicitly quoted them in his reply, leaving little doubt that he was indeed “the one to come.”

* Source: “Forty Gospel Homilies: PL 76, 1077” by Thomas of Villanova (1486-1555), who abandoned an academic career to become in 1516 an Augustinian friar. His time and money were devoted to the poor, the sick, and to ransoming captives, so that he was called the Beggar Bishop, father of the poor. His many sermons had an influence on Spanish spiritual literature.

December 16, 2007
Third Sunday in Advent

The heart of love with grace abounds.
It makes the desert bloom.
It clears and cleans the bleakest grounds,
And power's arrogance confounds,
So hope may find a room.

-- An Advent hymn by F. Richard Garland (2007)

Oh, how long, how long we've waited!
Jesus, come and set us free
from the fears and sins we've hated!
You were born so this can be!

-- An Advent hymn by Brenton Prigge (2005)

The Reverend Dr. James E. Swanson

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