

Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren

Long Green and Kaness Rds., near Glen Arm, MD

December 18, 2016

Worship 10:00 am Sunday School 11:10 am

Large print hymnals are available see an usher

This room is equipped with a sound loop for the hearing impaired

Fourth Sunday of Advent

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:20b-21)

Beginning with Praise (9:50 am) “The virgin Mary...” 202

Announcements

Prelude

Call to Worship Ethan Lane

Hymn “Angels from the realms of glory” *(insert)*

combined, verse by verse, with

Lighting the Advent Wreath

and the

Responsive Prayer *(back of bulletin)*

*Hymn “Love came down at Christmas” 208

On Love from the book of Ruth

Sharing our joys and concerns

Hymn “What child is this” 215

Pastoral Prayer

On Love, part 2 1 Corinthians 13

Remembering Engagements *(a time to briefly share of how, when, or where marriage proposals happened among us)*

Returning our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Video Matthew 1:1-16 – The genealogy of Jesus
(Please sign the attendance pad and pass it on)

Scripture Matthew 1:18-25

Message *“Breaking a Resolution”*

*Song “Joseph heard the troubling News” *(insert)*

*Benediction

*Postlude

*Rise in body or in spirit

* * * * *

message to be posted at
rockhay.tripod.com/sermons/2016/16-12-18.htm
www.lgvcob.org/sermons/2016/16-12-18.mp3

The Offertory Video, (https://youtu.be/OvZW58LQg_k) a production of *Abbey Church* in Gloucester, England, makes use of a song by Andrew Peterson (www.andrew-peterson.com) from his musical, “Behold The Lamb Of God.”

“Joseph heard the troubling News” is by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette
http://www.carolynshymns.com/joseph_heard_the_troubling_news.html

Call to Worship

(1 – Ethan, 2 - Pete)

- 1 - It's almost time.
- 2 - Time for renewed wonder and awe.
- 1 - Time for gratitude and joy.
- 2 - Time for celebration.
- 1 - Time for loving.
- 2 - Time for adoration.

- 1 - Look!
- 2 - A Virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son,
- 1 - and his name shall be called Emmanuel;
- 2 - which means, God-with-us.
- 1 - It's almost time.
- 2 - Emmanuel, God is with us!
- 1 - Hallelujah!

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Minister of the Uniting Church in Australia

(Ethan)

We begin with a Christmas carol which calls us to “come and worship Christ the newborn King!” We will pause after each verse and light the four outer candles on the Advent wreath, one at a time. After the first, second, and fourth verses we will also join in portions of the Responsive Prayer on the back of your bulletin. The words to both hymn and prayer will also be on the screen. If in doubt, just follow them. Please remain seated until we motion you to rise during the fourth verse...

Let's sing together “Angels from the realms of glory.”

“Angels from the realms of glory”

(verse 1)

(1st candle lighter processes with a lit candle as we sing)

Angels from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
you who sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!

Re-lighting the first candle – Hope

*(in silence, the candle lighter light the front candle,
then quietly returns to her/his seat)*

Responsive Prayer

(part 1)

One: O Shepherd of Israel, Shepherd of all people, in this darkest part of the year we long for the dawning of a new day. We long for a time when the power of evil is overcome. And now we see it! Your light is breaking forth into our world.

All: Restore us, O God. Let your face shine, that we may be saved.

“Angels from the realms of glory”

(verse 2)

(2nd candle lighter processes with a lit candle as we sing)

Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
yonder shines the infant Light;
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!

“Angels from the realms of glory”

(verse 3)

(3rd candle lighter processes with a lit candle as we sing)

Sages, leave your contemplations,
brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great Desire of nations,
you have seen the natal star;
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!

Re-lighting the second candle – Peace

*(in silence, the candle lighter light the right candle,
then quietly returns to her/his seat)*

Responsive Prayer

(part 2)

One: God of wonderment and majesty, we are awed
that you would visit our world when there is so
much violence and hatred, so many fractures in
the human family. And yet we know that it is
your presence with us in Jesus that heals us.

**All: Restore us, O God. Let your face shine, that
we may be saved.**

Re-lighting the third candle – Joy

*(in silence, the candle lighter light the left/pink candle,
then quietly returns to her/his seat)*

motion congregation to rise for the 4th verse

“Angels from the realms of glory”

(verse 4)

(4th candle lighter processes with a lit candle as we sing)

Saints before the altar bending,
watching long in hope and fear,
suddenly the Lord, descending,
in his temple shall appear:
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!

Lighting the fourth candle – Love

*(in silence, the candle lighter light the back candle,
then quietly returns to her/his seat)*

Responsive Prayer

(part 3)

One: Holy Child of Bethlehem, enter our lives, enter our hearts. With your all-encompassing love, bring light and life, claiming us forever in your new covenant.

All: Restore us, O God. Let your face shine, that we may be saved. Amen.

Please be seated.

On Love from the book of Ruth

(Ethan)

Once upon a time, in the days when judges led Israel, there was a famine in the land. A man, Elimelech, from Bethlehem, left home to live in the country of Moab, with his wife, Naomi. Unfortunately, Elimelech died, leaving Naomi with two sons. The sons took Moabite wives: Orpah and Ruth. They lived in Moab for the next ten years. But then the two brothers died. Now Naomi was left without sons or husband.

(Pete)

She decided one day to leave the country of Moab and set out for home with her two daughters-in-law. After a short while on the road, Naomi told them, “Go back and live with your mothers. And may God treat you as graciously as you treated your husbands and me. May God give each of you a new home and a new husband!” She kissed them and they cried openly.

(Ethan)

Both said, “No, we’re going on with you to your people.” But Naomi was firm: “Why would you come with me? I cannot give you future husbands? Go back. This is a bitter pill for me to swallow. God has dealt me a hard blow.”

(Pete)

Again they cried openly. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye and left, but Ruth embraced her and held on. Despite Naomi's protests, Ruth said,

[let's read this together:]

“Don't force me to leave you; don't make me go home. Where you go, I go; and where you live, I'll live. Your people are my people, your God is my god; where you die, I'll die, and that's where I'll be buried, so help me God—not even death itself is going to come between us!”

(Ethan)

[Those are love's words, my friends. They remind us of the steadfast, perhaps even stubborn, love of God. Do you agree?]

(Pete)

When Naomi saw that Ruth had her heart set on going with her, she gave in. And so, the two traveled together to Bethlehem. When they arrived in that little town, Naomi told her old neighbors, who recognized her, “Don't call me Naomi; call me Bitter, for God has dealt me a bitter blow.”

The barley harvest was just beginning.

(Ethan)

It so happened that Naomi had a relative by marriage, a man prominent and rich, connected with Elimelech's family. His name was Boaz. It just so happened that one day, when Ruth went to work, gleaning amid the harvest [*which is what poor people did in order to have enough food to live*] she ended up in the part of the field owned by Boaz.

(Pete)

[Are you seeing some of God's love light in the darkness, my friends?]

(Ethan)

Boaz noticed and asked about Ruth. “Where did she come from?” His foreman said, “She's a Moabite girl, who came home with Naomi. She asked permission to glean and I gave it. She's been at it steady ever since.”

(Pete)

Boaz then spoke with Ruth directly, telling her not to go to any other field to glean, but to stay in this one. “Don't worry,” he said, “I've given orders to my servants not to harass you. I've heard about you, how you treated your mother-in-law after the death of her husband, and how you left your home to come live among a bunch of total strangers with her. May God reward you, and shelter you under his wings.”

(Ethan)

At the end of the day, Boaz sent her home with extra grain, nearly a full sack of barley! Naomi was astounded, and when she heard about Boaz, she said “God bless that man! The Lord hasn't quite walked out on us after all! He still loves us, in bad times as well as good! By the way, Boaz is also a close relative of ours!” [*You could almost see the wheels turning in Naomi's mind. New possibilities were rising*]... In the days that followed Ruth gleaned in Boaz's fields until both the barley and wheat harvesting were finished.

(Pete)

About that time, Naomi shared the plan she had cooked up, to arrange a good home for Ruth so she could have a happy life. It involved making a move that very night at the threshing floor.

(Ethan)

“Take a bath,” she instructed Ruth. “Put on perfume. Get all dressed up and go to the threshing floor. But don’t let Boaz know you’re there until the party is well under way and he’s had plenty of food and drink. When you see him slipping off to sleep, watch where he lies down and then go there. Lie at his feet to let him know that you are available to him for marriage. Then wait and see what he says. He’ll tell you what to do.”

(Pete)

[*Can you imagine. That was a rather risky proposition, but*] Ruth replied, “If you say so, I’ll do it, just as you’ve told me.” So, she went and put her mother-in-law’s plan into action.

(Ethan)

With the threshing for the day done, Boaz ate and drank his fill, and then went off to get some sleep. Ruth quietly followed; she lay down to signal her availability for marriage. In the middle of the night, the man was suddenly startled and sat up. Surprise! This woman was there at his feet!

(Pete)

“Who are you?” she said. It was a dangerous moment.

(Ethan)

“I am Ruth,” she said, “take me under your protecting wing. You are my close relative, you know, you have the right to marry me.”

(Pete)

[*Silence*] ... The Boaz said, “God bless you, my dear daughter! What a splendid expression of love! And when you could have had your pick of any of the young men around. And now, don’t you worry about a thing; I’ll do all you could want or ask. I am a close relative to you, but there is one even closer than I am. Tomorrow I’ll act. If he wants to exercise his family responsibility, he’ll have his chance; but if he isn’t interested, as God lives, I’ll do it. Now go back to sleep until morning.”

(Ethan)

A few hours later, while it was still dark, Boaz quietly sent her home with an abundance of grain. Upon arrival, Naomi asked, “And how did things go, my dear daughter?” Ruth told her everything. “Sit back and relax, my dear daughter, until we find out how things turn out; that man isn’t going to fool around. Mark my words, he’s going to get everything wrapped up today.”

(Pete)

Boaz went straight to the public square and waited until that closer relative came, and they talked. At first, the closer relative was interested, thinking hungrily about Elimelech’s property. “I’ll buy it,” he said. But then he was reminded that it came with two women. “Oh, I can’t do that,” the man replied. I’d jeopardize my own family’s inheritance. You go ahead and buy it—you can have my rights—I can’t do it.”

(Ethan)

And so, Boaz did. There in the town square, in front of everyone, he took responsibility. “Ruth shall become my wife and keep the name of her husband and father-in-law alive. The memory and reputation will not disappear out of this family or from this hometown.”

(Ethan)

All the people then said, “We are witnesses. May God make this woman like Rachel and Leah, who built the family of Israel. May God make you a pillar in Ephrathah and famous in Bethlehem! With the children God gives you from this young woman, may your family rival the family of Perez, the son Tamar bore to Judah.”

(Pete)

Boaz married Ruth. By God’s gracious gift she conceived and had a son. The town women said to Naomi, “Blessed be God! He didn’t leave you without family to carry on your life. May this baby grow up to be famous in Israel! He’ll make you young again! He’ll take care of you in old age. And this daughter-in-law who has brought him into the world and loves you so much, why, she’s worth more to you than seven sons!”

(Ethan)

Naomi took the baby and held him in her arms, cuddling him, cooing over him, waiting on him hand and foot. The neighborhood women started calling him “Naomi’s baby boy!” But his real name was Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David, [who became king of Israel].

abridged and adapted from *The Message*
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Pastoral Prayer

Remembering how God chose a humble young woman and a carpenter to provide the nurture for Christ Jesus, let us seek the special blessing of God upon the ordinary Christians who serve unnoticed and often unappreciated in the community.

Responses:

Pastor: **Be with them, God of Jesus.**

People: Be with them, Immanuel.

Let us pray.

Christian carpenters and other skilled workers who day by day ply their trades with skill and integrity to the glory of God;

Pastor: **Be with them, God of Jesus.**

People: Be with them, Immanuel.

Reliable citizens in service organisations, local government, school committees, little aths, St John’s Ambulance, Scouts, and the rural fire service.

Pastor: **Be with them, God of Jesus.**

People: Be with them, Immanuel.

Christian police officers, street cleaners, teachers, gardeners, social workers, parking attendants, nurses, shop assistants.

Pastor: **Be with them, God of Jesus.**

People: Be with them, Immanuel.

Single parents who are always on call, providing physical and spiritual nurture and lovingly attending to a thousand small details every day.

Pastor: **Be with them, God of Jesus.**

People: Be with them, Immanuel.

The ordinary believers in our own families whom we often take for granted, and steadfast Christian friends who are always there when we need them.

Pastor: Be with them, God of Jesus.

People: **Be with them, Immanuel.**

The quiet achievers in our congregations, who though unheralded, express their faith in numerous practical ways.

Pastor: Be with them, God of Jesus.

People: **Be with them, Immanuel.**

Ordinary ministers of no remarkable gifts or fame, who lovingly and faithfully tend the flock of Christ.

Pastor: Be with them, God of Jesus.

People: **Be with them, Immanuel.**

God of grace, we pray for these, and a host like them, who constantly leaven this world with goodness and mercy, yet ask for nothing except the knowledge that they do Christ's will.

Pastor: Be with them, God of Jesus.

People: **Be with them, Immanuel.**

Help us, loving God, to learn the way of Christ from one another, and in your hands may our very ordinariness become a witness to your glory in Immanuel.. Through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen!

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On Love, part 2 – 1 Corinthians 13

(Ethan)

¹ If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

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Remembering Engagements

(a time to briefly share of how, when, or where marriage proposals happened among us)

(Pete)

A short while ago we heard how, when, and where a marriage proposal transpired between Ruth and Boaz. It was hardly our traditional down on one knee, “will you marry me?” event. However, folks back in Bible days probably heard it as the way things should be done - it was their tradition. Of course, how many proposals today happen the way everyone thinks they should?

Let’s take a few moments and hear about how some of your engagements took place. Is anyone willing to share? One encouragement: please be as brief as you can. Leave the long version for one-to-one conversation. How, when, where did it happen?

(both Ethan and Pete head out with microphones to be used those who volunteer)

Returning our Tithes and Offerings

(Ethan)

Thank you all for sharing. Let keep all this in mind as we later turn to the gospel story of another engaged couple, Joseph and Mary. There is no account in the Bible of how, when, and where the proposal happened. We just hear them as being “betrothed,” not yet married. Immediately preceding this, Matthew’s gospel begins with a genealogy, full of all sorts of strange sounding names that I’m glad I don’t have to read aloud. Instead, we have an Offertory Video which sings and writes out the names for all to see.

As we watch, the ushers will quietly pass the plates for our offering. Be generous, so that we can accomplish what we have committed ourselves to as a congregation through our budget. Would you also please sign the attendance pad, located on the center aisle side of each pew, and pass it on? Thank you. And now:

Matthew 1:1-16 – The genealogy of Jesus.

Offertory Video

Matthew 1:18-25

(1 - Ethan, 2 - Pete)

- 1 - ¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.
- 2 - ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.
- 1 - ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,
- 2 - “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:
 - 1 - ²³ “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,”
 - 2 - which means, “God is with us.”
- 1 - ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him;
- 2 - he took her as his wife, ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son;
- 1 - and he named him Jesus.

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Benediction

Go forth with a dream in your soul
and a song in your heart,
knowing that God's promises
are always fulfilled.
The time is almost here.
Get ready for wonder!

by Joanne Carlson Brown
pastor at Tibbetts United Methodist Church
in West Seattle
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