THOSE Way The way

(Candlelight Christmas Concert preview)

Welcome

Call to Worship

John the Baptist called, "Prepare the way!" How do we prepare our minds for worship? We let go of busy thoughts.

We make space for God to speak.

How do we prepare our hearts for worship? We bless what we feel: our hopes and fears, our pains and doubts. We make space for God to move us.

How do we prepare our bodies for worship?
We fill our senses with the scents, sights, and sounds of the spaces where we seek God.
We breathe in God's mercy.
We exhale God's love.

How do we prepare our souls for worship? We trust that even now, God is here.

Prepare the way. Let us worship our Holy God.

Lighting of the Second Candle: Peace

May this light remind us that there is another way. May this light be our invitation to be Advent people – people who dream. The Treichel Family

Hymn # 106 Prepare the Way, O Zion

Prayer of Confession

Holy God,

so often we treat peace as a state of mind.

We seek it in the things of this world,
and forget that your peace is bigger than something
we can buy, consume, download, or vote for.

We mistake peace for something we achieve when we're at our best.
But we trust that peace is the result of decisions we make every day,
whether or not we are feeling up to the task.

We confess that we need your help this Advent season.

Prepare the way for greater peace, and teach us how to be a part of it.

Assurance of Forgiveness

May God forgive us. May God's guiding hand surround us.

May we know comfort. May we know peace.

In Christ's name we are forgiven. Amen.

Response

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy, O tidings of comfort and joy.

Children's Message

Ministry Updates

Giving and Receiving of Tithes and Offerings

Decking of the Giving Tree

Hymn # 110 Love Has Come

Prayer for Illumination

God of Peace,

there are so many thoughts filling our minds.

We would like to be as focused as John the Baptist:

preparing the way;

gathering the crowd;

spreading the word of your arrival.

Perhaps then we would know peace.

However, we are so often a swirling compilation:

lists and tasks;

projects and plans;

worries and fears.

So today, we ask for your help in preparing the way.

Start with our heads, and move to our hearts.

Help us to hear you more clearly.

Help us to know peace.

Gratefully we pray, Amen.

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 40:1-11 Prepare the Way of the Lord

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and crv to her

that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid,

that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

³ A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our

God.

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level,

tne uneven grouna snall become leve and the rough places a plain.

⁵ Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶ A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass,

their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹ Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings;^[a]

lift up your voice with strength,

O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,

lift it up, do not fear;

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

¹⁰ See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him;

his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

¹¹ He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms,

and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep..

Special Music

Carols of the Nativity arr. Mary Kay Parrish

(Candlelight Christmas Concert preview)

Prayers of the People & The 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Mark 1:1-8 John baptizes for repentence

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;

³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

⁴ John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Sermon

"A Highway to the Heart"

Rev. Bob Sheldon

Affirmation of Faith

We believe that a voice cried out in the wilderness,

saying "Prepare the way of the Lord."

And so we show up to worship

in lonely places and overcrowded ones;

in noise and in silence.

We march toward justice.

We plant and make art.

We choose hope.

We sing loudly and share stories.

We fall together.

We rise together.

We love together.

We do these things because we believe that God loves us

and loves us so much that God showed up here.

We prepare ourselves for all that God has prepared for our world.

May it be so. Amen.

Hymn # 152

What Star Is This, with Beams So Bright

Blessing and Response

Postlude

Sortie Cesar Franck

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT FIRST PRES

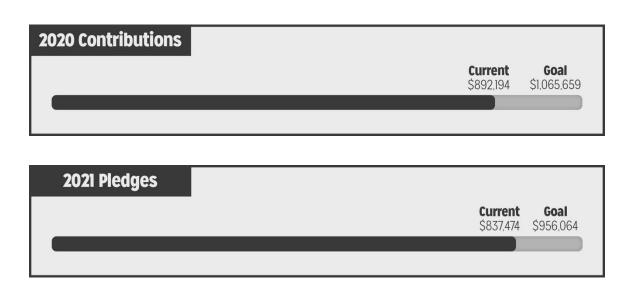
Leading us in worship today are Rev. Bob Sheldon, Interim Pastor; Rev. Caroline Cupp, Executive Pastor; Sándor Kádár, Director of Music; Kira Boros, Choir Accompanist; The Chancel Ringers; Miner Street Brass.

This service was adapted from a liturgy by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Giving Tree Drop Off – If you have a gift to drop off for the Giving Tree, please bring it over to First Pres today (12/6) between 12 - 2 or Monday between 12 - 3. If you pull up to the front of the church, someone will come out to your car and pick up the gift. Questions? Contact Pastor Caroline (ccupp@firstpreswc.com, 484.459.8220)

Advent Bible Study - During the month of December, the Wednesday night Bridge class is focusing our conversation around the *Those Who Dream* devotional booklet. From 6:30 – 7:30 pm, we are considering the artwork, poetry and teachings that the book offers us and reflecting on how it inspires and challenges us. You don't need to have a copy of the book to join in - all are welcome! Contact Sara Pantazes for the Zoom information.

December Anti-Racism Conversation – This month's session will take place on Sunday, December 20 from noon – 1 pm over Zoom. We will consider how voter suppression is a theological issue and learn more about voting rights through grace-full listening and conversation. All invited to join and feel free to invite a friend or family member.



The above shows the giving amount as of 12/02/2020 compared to the 2020 full year goal as well as the 2021 pledges so far. These charts will be presented each week to keep the congregation well-informed of our progress. Further details can be found on the Financial Reporting page on our website.