

The Presque Isle Congregational Church
 **United Church of Christ**
December 17, 2023 - Third Sunday in Advent

Prelude Barbara Merryman
Welcoming Music *You Are Welcome Here*
Words of Welcome Melissa Vance

Introit *Make of My Heart a Stable¹*

Call to Worship Regina Bowie

In our poverty, we await the son of Mary,
Who brings good news.

In our brokenheartedness, we await the Incarnate One,
Who heals our hearts.

In our captivity, we await the Redeemer,
Who proclaims freedom.

In our mourning, we await the Wonderful Counselor,
Who offers comfort.

In the midst of this world's injustice, we await the Christ Child,
Who brings down the powerful and lifts up the lowly.
Who welcomes all to this holy worship, this holy table.

Opening Prayer (In Unison) Regina Bowie

Holy God of Joy, We rejoice in the reality of who you are. We live within the joy of your love for us. Our contentment comes and goes. Our happiness ebbs and flows. Our feelings depend upon our circumstances, our physical health, our brain chemistry. But our *joy* is deeply rooted in our identity as your beloved children. And we give you thanks. Amen.

Opening Hymn *The Baptist Shouts on Jordan's Shore* vv. 1,2,3,6

Lighting The Candle of Joy Terry and Erinn Kelly

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and set lights in the sky — sun and moon and stars.

By these stars, our ancestors charted their journeys. By these stars, they knew God was with them. Today we light two candles to bring the fire of the stars down from heaven to earth, to nestle among the greens.

We named our first candle Hope (*Light the first purple candle.*); our second candle, Peace (*Light the second purple candle*). Today, we light our third candle, the pink candle of Joy. (Light the candle.)

We too are on a journey, and we do not always know the way. Even when despair is all around us and apathy seems the order of the day, we set our face steadily towards the light.

Unison: Jesus, as we search for signs of joy this week, help us to become the signs of joy that others are searching for. As these candles are but a glimpse of the light of the heavens, help us to be a glimpse of heaven's joy. Amen.

¹ *Make of My Heart a Stable*. Composer: Amanda Udis-Kessler; Video and Recording: Ken Janzen. Used with permission from queersacredmusic.com.

Prayer of Confession (Unison)

Gracious God, long ago you sent Christ to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, and to proclaim liberty to the captives. You then asked us to go and do the same for we are the church of Jesus Christ. Forgive us, we pray, for we have not continued to share the good news. We have focused on ourselves and neglected to help others. Help us to continue to share the healing and loving words of Christ to all the world and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news! Through the grace and love of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

Thanks be to God!

Choral Music *Born to Set Us Free* PIUCC Choir

Two Minute Message Melissa Vance

Scripture Reading Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-11 NRSVUE

Reflection Daniel Jackson

Reflective Music Barbara Merryman

Blessing of Gifts Gary Sanfacon

In this holiday season, we find many demands made upon our time and resources. Yet in worship we are called to remember who is the author of all that we are and all that we have. In response to God's gracious action in our lives, we are called to give an offering to God. *(Pause while the offering plate is brought forward)*

Unison: Thank you, God, for all that we have and all that we are. We take these gifts given today and dedicate them ever and only to you. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer and The Lord's Prayer Gary Sanfacon

Our **Creator***, 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 forever. Amen

Closing Hymn *Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates*

Blessing

May you leave this place remembering that we are witnesses to Christ in our midst and let us share the ultimate hope we have for his Advent.

And may the peace of God, the love of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always. Amen.

God Be With You

Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-11

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, ²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, ³to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. ⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

⁸For I, the LORD, love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. ¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my whole being shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.