

# *Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church*

*Where All the People are Ministers of Christ*

**Our vision is to seek to live and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to nurture persons of all ages and circumstances for faithful discipleship, and to transform faith into service to others.**



Photo Credit: The Reverend Mi Sook Ahn

## *Reverend Candee Martin*

7801 Church Lane, Toano, Virginia 23168

Adult Sunday School begins at 9:15am.

**Welcome to our worship service!** Mt. Vernon has been worshipping our Lord and serving the Greater Williamsburg Community since 1887. If we can be of any assistance to you, please let us know.

## Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24, 2023 “Behind Every Great Church 10:15am  
There is Prayer”

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Worship Leader

Theresa Kaufmann

\*Please stand as you are able. Please read in Unison in **Bold**.

### THE PEOPLE GATHER

Prelude & Meditation

Organist, Carol Kendall

Lighting the Candles

Welcome & Announcements

Centering Words

The very air we breathe is filled with joyous expectation.  
The One who has done great things for us is with us  
now. Glory to God in the highest!

Introit “Light the Advent Candle” TFWS#2090(v. 4)

Lighting of the Fourth Advent Candle – Love (responsive)

When the angel Gabriel visited Mary, announcing God’s plan for her to conceive and give birth to the Messiah, “Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’” (Luke 1:34) And yet, only a few months later, Mary sings to Elizabeth, My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on, all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name (Luke 1:46-49). We, like Mary, hear God’s call to be part of making God’s dream for our salvation and flourishing a reality, and we question, “How can this be? I am only...” Yet, like Mary, the “onlys” that make us hesitate are gifts God can and will use as God’s love transforms us into bearers of good news.

**We wait as people who have encountered divine Love that disrupts the status quo and ushers us into abundant life marked by mutual love and peace that flows from the flourishing of all people.**

We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, our just peace, our fierce joy, and the love that transforms us. May Love grow within us, transforming us into bold witnesses of God's salvation with our voices and our lives.  
**Amen.**

[Light the four outer candles of the Advent wreath.]

Hymn of Reflection    Emmanuel, Emmanuel    UMH #204

\*Call to Worship (responsive)

When Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, their lives were forever changed.

**Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and Mary proclaimed faith in God, her savior.**

The children they carried in their wombs heralded expectation and hope for the world.

**We are heirs of this expectation and hope. We are heirs of this promise of God.**

Come! Let us worship.

\*Opening Prayer (unison)

**God of joyous expectation, come to us this day. May the miracles in our lives fill us with wonder. May an encounter with your goodness and grace cause our hearts to leap within us. Receive us into the arms of your mercy, that we may feel you near us and rest secure in your many blessings. Amen.**

\*Hymn of Praise    "Once in David's Royal City"    UMH #250

**PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD**

Prayer for Illumination (unison)

Rev. Candee Martin

**We thank you, O God of sacred stories, for the witness of holy scripture. Through it, you nurture our imaginations, touch our feelings, increase our awareness, and challenge our assumptions. Bless, we pray, our hearing of your word this day. Speak to each of us; speak to all of us; and grant that by the power of your Spirit, we may be hearers and doers of your word. Amen.**

Gospel Lesson

Luke 1:39-45 (NRSVue)

Rev. Candee Martin

<sup>39</sup>In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, <sup>40</sup>where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup>and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup>And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? <sup>44</sup>For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup>And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

The Word of God for the people of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

Prayers of the People

Rev. Candee Martin

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Candee Martin

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

**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, forever. Amen.**

Hymn of Meditation “In the Bleak Midwinter” UMH #221

The Message “The Baby Leaped” Rev. Candee Martin

### **RESPONSE TO THE WORD**

Hymn of Response “Love Came Down at Christmas”  
UMH #242

Special Music The Choir

Offering

Offertory Prayer (unison)

**Glorious God, source of every good gift, bless our tithes and offerings this day. May they lift up the lowly, fill the hungry with good things, and bring strength and mercy to those in need. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.**

\*Doxology: “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow”  
UMH #95

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him all creatures here below; praise him above ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Amen.**

\*Affirmation of Faith for Advent (unison) Candee Martin

**I believe in the spirit of Christ,  
for it is the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
whose birth we celebrate;  
I believe in the lights of Christmas,  
for they remind me of him who is  
the Light of the world;  
I believe in the greenery of Christmas,  
for it symbolizes the eternal life  
of those in Christ;**

**I believe in giving gifts at Christmas,  
for it is in keeping with the greatest gift  
the world has ever known;  
I believe in being childlike at Christmas,  
for Jesus said we must become as children  
to enter the kingdom of heaven;  
And I believe in the angels' song  
about peace on earth among persons of goodwill,  
for when my will is good, as it is at Christmas,  
I feel a peace and joy in my heart  
that is unlike anything else  
in all the world.  
It *has* to be the peace and joy of God! Amen.**

**\*An Advent Prayer (responsive)                      Rev. Candee Martin**

It is hard to wait patiently, O God, for the gift of your  
promised salvation.

We long to nurture the joyous expectation  
that Mary and Elizabeth discovered in their greeting,  
but we have grown accustomed to living with  
disappointment.

**We yearn to feel our hearts leap within us  
as your Spirit stirs our slumbering souls,  
but we have allowed ourselves  
to find solace in lesser things.**

**Fill us with your grace,  
that we may give birth to hope and joy,  
and that we may abide in your peace and  
love.**

**In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.**

## **SENDING FORTH**

**\*Hymn of Celebration "O Come, All Ye Faithful"  
UMH #234 (vs. 1,2,3,4)**

**Extinguishing the Candles**

**Christ's light leads us into the world to serve.**

\*Commission and Blessing (responsive) Rev. Candee Martin  
Depart in peace, and take with you the certain knowledge  
That God is always coming into the world.

**We will seek God, not in a long ago stable or ancient manger, but in the people we meet and the depths of our own hearts.**

May the blessing of Christmas make you a blessing to others;

May the peace of the season pervade all that you do.

**We will welcome the challenge of discipleship.**

**We will offer ourselves as God's ministers.**

**We will go forth in hope, peace, joy, and love.**

Postlude

**\* Please stand as you are able.**  
**Hearing Assistance Devices** are available in the Narthex

**Stewardship for week of December 17: \$2,420.00**

*We sincerely hope you have felt the presence of the Lord in our Worship Service this morning.*

*We appreciate your attendance and support.*

*Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church  
7801 Church Lane  
Toano, VA 23168*

### Copyright Notice

\*Centering Words, Call to Worship, Opening Prayer, Offertory Prayer, An Advent Prayer, B.J. Beu, *The Abingdon Worship Annual 2021* (Abingdon Press, 2020)

\*Advent Candlelighting Liturgy; Dr. Lisa Hancock, Director of Worship Arts Ministries, served as an organist and music minister in United Methodist congregations in the Northwest Texas and North Texas Annual Conferences, as well as the New Day Amani/Upendo house churches in Dallas. After receiving her Master of Sacred Music and Master of Theological Studies from Perkins School of Theology, Lisa earned her PhD in Religious Studies from Southern Methodist University wherein she researched and wrote on the doctrine of Christ, disability, and atonement.

\*Prayer of Illumination, Ann B. Day, *Touch Holiness: Resources for Worship*, edited by Ruth C. Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi, (United Church Press, Cleveland, Ohio, 1990, The Pilgrim Press)

\*An Affirmation of Faith for Advent, John R. Killinger, *Lost in Wonder, Love, & Praise (Prayers for Christian Worship)*, (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2001)

\*Commissioning and Blessing, Contributed by Jeanyne Slettom; Process & Faith is a program of the Center for Process Studies, an affiliated program of the Claremont School of Theology. This site and all content ©2009 Process & Faith, unless otherwise noted.  
UMH: United Methodist Hymnal.

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**A DONATION HAS BEEN MADE  
IN MEMORY AND HONOR OF:**

**In Memory of Celia Prince, by Bob & Fran Delo.**

**In Memory of Ruth Howard, by Bob & Fran Delo.**

**In Memory of Lanny Smith, by Betty Smith.**

**In Memory of Melanie Joy Morris, by Betty Smith & Family**

**In Memory of James & Jo Smith, by Betty Smith**

**In Memory of Virginia Oliver, by Betty Smith**

**In Memory of Edwin & Virginia Hawkins, by Suzanne Latimer.**

**In Memory of Mike Latimer, by Suzanne Latimer.**

**In Memory of Stan Hawkins, by Suzanne Latimer.**

**In Memory of George Latimer, by Suzanne Latimer.**

**In Memory of Kent Glindemann, by Al & Kathy Glindemann.**

**In Memory of Charlie Sears, by Bonnie Sears**

**In Memory of Wilbur & Lillian Reash, by Bonnie Sears**

**In Memory of Roy & Anna Jane Sears, by Bonnie Sears**

**In honor of our church staff, by Al & Kathy Glindemann.**



## Announcements/Missions

- **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service:** Will be held this evening at 5pm.
- **Office Closure:** The office will be closed Monday, December 25th and Tuesday, December 26<sup>th</sup> in observance of Christmas.
- **Sunday School:** There will be no Sunday school Sunday, December 31<sup>st</sup>, it will resume January 7<sup>th</sup>.
- **Fellowship Time:** The 3rd Sunday of every month there will be a Fellowship Time after the Sunday Service.
- **Cereal...Cereal...Cereal:** We will concentrate on collecting ONLY cereal donations to St. Olaf's & PGO Food Pantries, so please consider picking up an extra box or two of cereal each week and deposit it in the basket in the narthex. It's a need that we can help to fulfill. Thanks!
- **The Cemetery Association:** Those who would be so moved can contribute to the fund for the "Cemetery Fence Replacement." The Cemetery association is a 501-(C)3 fund.
- **Bridge Group:** There will be **NO** Bridge on, Tuesday, December 26<sup>th</sup> in observance of Christmas.