



Ascension PCA

December 17, 2023



THIRD SUNDAY OF
ADVENT

**A community of worshipping, maturing,
and multiplying disciples of Jesus Christ,
to the glory of God the Father,
by the power of His Spirit,
and in the hope of God's Kingdom.**

WELCOME TO ASCENSION!

Thank you for joining us for worship today.

**We are delighted that you are here,
especially if this is your first time with us.**

Connect with One Another:

We would love to know that you were here this morning and encourage you to fill in a *Connect Card* so that we can follow up with you, answer your questions, or pray for you. Our practice of wearing *Name Tags* is to make you feel more comfortable among us, help you to identify staff and leadership, and make it easier for you to connect with us. See our back page for contact information. We heartily invite you to join us for *refreshments* and conversation after the service.

To Parents of Young Children:

If you would like to utilize it, we have a staffed *Nursery* for children through age 3 across the hall. We encourage younger children to remain with us during the service. They are not a distraction! *Clipboards for kids* are available to encourage our children to participate in our worship together. Stop by the special Kids Table to pick up clipboards and crayons for your child. Feel free to sit up front where your child can more easily see and hear what is happening.

Free Biblical Resources:

If you don't have a copy of God's Word, please help yourself to one of the free Bibles as our gift for you to take home. You are also welcome to browse the literature and resources available to you on the Welcome Table, carts, and stands.

Joyfully worshipping together
as the family of God,
with reverence and awe,
mindful of our heritage
as well as our present context.



A WORD ABOUT OUR LITURGY

The elements and sequence that make up
our worship service (the liturgy) is the way
we tell ourselves, one another, and all in this place,
the grand story of the Triune God:

the story of God pursuing a people
despite their wanderings and forgetfulness,
and shaping them into His people for His glory.

QUIETING OUR HEARTS FOR WORSHIP

O come, O come, and be our God-with-us,
O long-sought with-ness for a world without,
O secret seed, O hidden spring of light.
Come to us Wisdom, come unspoken Name,
Come Root, and Key, and King, and holy Flame,
O quickened little wick so tightly curled,
Be folded with us into time and place,
Unfold for us the mystery of grace
And make a womb of all this wounded world.
O heart of heaven beating in the earth,
O tiny hope within our hopelessness,
Come to be born, to bear us to our birth,
To touch a dying world with new-made hands
And make these rags of time our swaddling bands.

~ Malcolm Guite

GOD CALLS US TO WORSHIP

We gather at the invitation of God through His Word.
He speaks first, revealing Himself to us,
and we respond with one voice in joy and thanksgiving!

PRAYER OF ADORATION

CALL TO WORSHIP

Hebrews 1:1-4

M: Long ago, at many times and in many ways,
God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,
but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son,
whom He appointed the heir of all things,
though whom He also created the world.
He is the radiance of the glory of God
and the exact imprint of His nature,
and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.
After making purification for sins,
He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
having become as much superior to angels
as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

SONGS OF PRAISE

Behold Our God

**Who has held the oceans in His hands?
Who has numbered every grain of sand?
Kings and nations tremble at His voice.
All creation rises to rejoice.**

Behold our God, seated on His throne.

Come, let us adore Him.

Behold our King! Nothing can compare.

Come, let us adore Him!

**Who has given counsel to the Lord?
Who can question any of His words?
Who can teach the One who knows all things?
Who can fathom all His wondrous deeds?**

Behold our God, seated on His throne.

Come, let us adore Him.

Behold our King! Nothing can compare.

Come, let us adore Him!

**Who has felt the nails upon His hands,
Bearing all the guilt of sinful man?
God eternal, humbled to the grave,
Jesus, Savior, risen now to reign!**

Behold our God, seated on His throne.

Come, let us adore Him.

Behold our King! Nothing can compare.

Come, let us adore ...

Behold our God, seated on His throne.

Come, let us adore Him.

Behold our King! Nothing can compare.

Come, let us adore Him!

Words and music by

Jonathan Baird, Meghan Baird, Ryan Baird, Stephen Altrogge (2011)

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Angels From the Realms of Glory

**Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth.**

Come and worship,

Come and worship,

Worship Christ, the newborn King.

**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.

**All creation, join in praising
God the Father, Spirit, Son;
Evermore your voices raising
to th'eternal Three in One.**

Come and worship,

Come and worship,

Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Words by James Montgomery (1816, 1825).

Music by Henry T. Smart (1867).

PUBLIC DOMAIN

GOD CLEANSSES US

We gather each week as sinners in constant need of His mercy. The corporate confession of sin acknowledges this and invites honest expression before God. However, God isn't silent as we cry out to Him — He assures us that His grace is bigger than our sin. God's forgiveness is for all those who humble themselves before Him in Christ Jesus.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT READINGS

Isaiah 7:10–14 / Matthew 1:18–25

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the LORD Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call His name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called His name Jesus.

CORPORATE CONFESSION OF SIN

**P: God of salvation, in Christ You have done great things —
our hearts are filled with joy.**

**By Your power You lifted us out of the wasteland of sin
and brought us with joy and laughter
into Your kingdom.**

Salvation is Your gift to us.

**But we confess that often we try to replace Your gift
with our own efforts.**

**We try to complete what is already perfect;
we try to add to what is already full;
we try to earn what we already have.**

Forgive us for our foolishness.

**Forgive us for not acknowledging the love
that has been shown to us.**

**Forgive us for occupying ourselves
with our own concerns rather than Yours.**

**Come to us anew, and by Your grace,
assist us to receive You**

with joy, as the shepherds;

with gratitude, as Simeon;

with obedience, as Mary;

with love, as You have loved us.

Even so: come, Lord Jesus, Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION OF SIN

*In these moments, we confess our personal sins to God
so that we may take hold of the forgiveness
won for us by Christ, our Redeemer.*

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Jeremiah 33:8 & Acts 10:43

M: I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against Me,
and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion
against Me.

P: **To Him all the prophets bear witness
that everyone who believes in [Jesus]
receives forgiveness of sins through His name.**

SONGS OF ASSURANCE

O Come, All Ye Faithful

**O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant!**

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!

**Come and behold Him,
born the King of angels.**

O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

**Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God,
glory in the highest:**

***O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!***

**Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
born this happy morning:
Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n!
Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing:**

***O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!***

Words by John Francis Wade (1751); tr. by Frederick Oakeley (1841; alt.).
Music from John Francis Wade's *Cantus Diversi* (1751).
PUBLIC DOMAIN

The Unbelievable

**Come and see the inconceivable
and believe the unbelievable:
God has come to dwell with us.
Begotten Son born into Adam's earth,
Promised One fulfilling ancient words,
God has come to dwell with us.**

***Who could ever know the depths
of the myst'ry of Your grace?
Though our minds can't take it in,
Lord, our hearts are filled with praise.***

**He will heal the unhealable,
He will save the unsavable;
God has come to dwell with us.
Heaven's joy will drink our bitter cup,
emptied out as He is lifted up;
God has come to dwell with us.**

***Who could ever know the depths
of the myst'ry of Your grace?
Though our minds can't take it in,
Lord, our hearts are filled with praise.***

**Lord, we're lost in overwhelming awe
at the thought of such amazing love;**

**God has come, God has come,
God has come to dwell with us.
God has come, God has come,
God has come to dwell with us.**

Words and music by Steve and Vikki Cook.
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GOD SPEAKS TO US

The Holy Spirit makes the reading and preaching of God's Word a crucial means of growing and comforting God's people and awakening people to new faith in Jesus.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

READING OF THE WORD

Zephaniah 3:9-20

- ⁹ "For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech,
that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD
and serve Him with one accord.
- ¹⁰ From beyond the rivers of Cush
My worshipers, the daughter of My dispersed ones,
shall bring My offering.
- ¹¹ On that day you shall not be put to shame
because of the deeds by which you have
rebelled against Me;
for then I will remove from your midst
your proudly exultant ones,
and you shall no longer be haughty
in My holy mountain.
- ¹² But I will leave in your midst
a people humble and lowly.
They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD,
- ¹³ those who are left in Israel;
they shall do no injustice
and speak no lies,
nor shall there be found in their mouth
a deceitful tongue.
For they shall graze and lie down,
and none shall make them afraid.

- 14 Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter of Jerusalem!
- 15 The LORD has taken away the judgments against you;
He has cleared away your enemies.
The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall never again fear evil.
- 16 On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
"Fear not, O Zion;
let not your hands grow weak.
- 17 The LORD your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;
He will rejoice over you with gladness;
He will quiet you by His love;
He will exult over you with loud singing.
- 18 I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival,
so that you will no longer suffer reproach.
- 19 Behold, at that time I will deal
with all your oppressors.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.
- 20 At that time I will bring you in,
at the time when I gather you together;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes," says the LORD.

GLORIA PATRI

**Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning,
is now and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen, Amen.**

PREACHING OF THE WORD

"The Song of the Savior"

Pastor Nate Hitchcock

PRAYER

GOD COMMUNES WITH US

The Lord's Supper is a meal for the family of God, given by Jesus the night before His death to be celebrated until His return. It points back to the cross, forward to the return of King, and spiritually nourishes us for today as we eat and drink in faith.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

CONFESSING OUR FAITH TOGETHER

The Apostles' Creed

**P: I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
and born of the Virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead and buried;
He descended into hell.**

The third day He rose again from the dead.

**He ascended into heaven
and sits on the right hand of God
the Father Almighty;**

**from there He shall come to judge
the quick and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

DOXOLOGY

**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.**

CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Please come forward to receive the elements from the elders at the table, then return to your seats. Please HOLD elements until we can all partake TOGETHER.

PRAYER | MEDITATION

GOD SENDS US

We end by receiving God's promises to us as His people.
He will be with us as we serve Him in this world,
to the end of all time.

BENEDICTION



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A NOTE ABOUT GIVING

Please make sure that checks are made out to
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to the **P.O. Box mailing address** listed.

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ASCENSION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

ASCENSION-PCA.ORG

10:00AM: Worship Service (in-person & livestream)

9:00AM: Discipleship Hour

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