



Ascension PCA

December 24, 2023



FOURTH 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

Christmas sets the centre on the edge;
The edge of town, out-buildings of an inn,
The fringe of an empire, far from privilege
And power, on the edge and outer spin
Of turning worlds, a margin of small stars
That edge a galaxy itself light years
From some unguessed-at cosmic origin,
Christmas sets the centre at the edge.

And from this day our world is re-aligned;
A tiny seed unfolding in the womb
Becomes the source from which we all unfold
And flower into being. We are healed,
The End begins, the tomb becomes a womb,
For now in Him all things are re-aligned.

~ *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

from Revelation 11:15-17

M: The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ,
and He will reign forever and ever.

**P: We give thanks to You, Lord God Almighty,
the One who is and who was,
because You have taken Your great power
and have begun to reign.**

M: God of Israel, with expectant hearts
we Your people await Christ's coming.
As once He came in humility,
so now may He come in glory,
that He may make all things perfect
in Your everlasting kingdom.
For He is Lord forever and ever.

P: Amen.

SONGS OF PRAISE

Joy to the World!

**Joy to the world! The Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room.
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n, and nature sing!**

**Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ.
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of His righteousness.
and wonders of His love,
and wonders of His love,
and wonders, wonders of His love.**

Words by Isaac Watts (1719).

Music by George Friedrich Händel (1742), arr. by Lowell Mason (1836).
PUBLIC DOMAIN

Angels We Have Heard on High

**Angels we have heard on high,
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
echoing their joyous strains.**

Glo — ria, in excelsis Deo!

Glo — ria, in excelsis Deo!

**Shepherds, why this jubilee?
why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be,
which inspire your heavenly song?**

Glo — ria, in excelsis Deo!

Glo — ria, in excelsis Deo!

**Come to Bethlehem and see,
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.**

Glo — ria, in excelsis Deo!

Glo — ria, in excelsis Deo!

Traditional French carol, translated by James Chadwick (1862).

French carol melody, arranged by Edwin S. Barnes (1937).

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.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT READINGS

Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

You have multiplied the nation;
You have increased its joy;
they rejoice before You
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon His shoulder,
and His name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of His government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those
with whom He is pleased!"

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

CORPORATE CONFESSION OF SIN

adapted from The Valley of Vision

P: Eternal God, how we mourn our sin and ingratitude.

**All things in heaven, earth, around, within, without,
condemn us —**

**the sun which sees our misdeeds,
the darkness which is as light to You,
the cruel accuser who charges us,
Your presence which scans our secret sins,
Your righteous law, Your holy Word,
our sin-soiled consciences.**

**We frame no excuse but confess,
“Father, we have sinned.”**

**Yet still we live,
and fly repenting to Your outstretched arms;
You will not cast us off,
for Jesus brings us near,
You will not condemn us,
for He died in our place,
You will not mark our mountains of sin,
for He leveled all,
and His beauty covers our deformities.**

**O God, we bid farewell to sin by clinging to His cross,
hiding in His wounds, and sheltering in His side. 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

**M: Hear this good news of great joy:
in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.**

**P: Thanks be to God!
Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on earth!**

SONG OF ASSURANCE

O Come, All You Unfaithful

**O come, all you unfaithful.
Come, weak and unstable.
Come, know you are not alone.**

**O come, barren and waiting ones,
Weary of praying. Come,
See what your God has done.**

*Christ is born. Christ is born.
Christ is born for you.*

**O come, bitter and broken.
Come, with fears unspoken.
Come, taste of His perfect love.**

**O come, guilty and hiding ones,
There is no need to run.
See what your God has done.**

*Christ is born. Christ is born.
Christ is born for you.*

*He's the Lamb who was given,
slain for our pardon.
His promise is peace
for those who believe.*

*He's the Lamb who was given,
slain for our pardon.
His promise is peace
for those who believe.*

**So come, though you have nothing.
Come, He is the offering.
Come, see what your God has done.**

**Christ is born. Christ is born.
Christ is born for you.**

**Christ is born. Christ is born.
Christ is born for you.**

Words and music by Lisa Clow and Bob Kauflin (2020).
© 2020 Sovereign Grace Praise

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

Haggai 2:1-9, 20-23

¹ In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet: ² "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, ³ "Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? ⁴ Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, ⁵ according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not. ⁶ For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. ⁷ And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. ⁸ The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, declares the LORD of hosts. ⁹ The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts."

²⁰ The word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, ²¹ "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, ²² and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. ²³ On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts."

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 Unfading Glory”

Pastor Nate Hitchcock

PRAYER

SERMON NOTES: _____

GIVING TO THE LORD

Matthew 2:11

And going into the house they saw the child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshipped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

SONG OF THANKSGIVING

Prepare Him Room

**O behold, the mystery now unfolds;
see the star shine on the virgin foretold.
Angels sing and light up the sky,
hope rings out in a newborn's cry;
Swing wide, you ancient gates,
for Christ is born today!**

***Prepare Him room,
Prepare Him room,
Let the King of glory enter in.***

**God with us, the promise has come to be;
this, the One, the prophets were longing to see.
In the darkness a blazing light,
to the hungry the words to life;
His kingdom now is near,
for those with ears to hear.**

***Prepare Him room,
Prepare Him room,
Let the King of glory enter in.***

**Oh, our hearts, as busy as Bethlehem,
hear Him knock;
don't say there's no room in the inn.
Through the cradle, cross, and grave,
see the love of God displayed;
Now He's risen and He reigns.
praise the Name above all names!**

***Prepare Him room,
Prepare Him room,
Let the King of glory enter in.***

***Prepare Him room,
Prepare Him room,
Let the King of glory enter in.***

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

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A 21,22,27,28

M: Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?

P: The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.

M: How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

P: Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to Himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.

M: Wherein does Christ's humiliation consist?

P: Christ's humiliation consisted in His being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.

M: Wherein consists Christ's exaltation?

P: Christ's exaltation consists in His rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

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.

SONG OF MEDITATION

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

**It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold.**

**"Peace on the earth, good will to men,
from heav'n's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
to hear the angels sing.**

**O ye, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow.**

**Look now! For glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
and hear the angels sing!**

**Yet with the woes of sin and strife
the world has suffered long;
beneath the angel strain have rolled
to thousand years of wrong.**

**And man, at war with man, hears not
the love song that they bring;
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
and hear the angels sing!**

**For lo, the days are hastening on,
by prophet bards foretold,
when with the ever-circling years
comes round the age of gold.**

**When peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world give back the song
which now the angels sing.**

Words by Edmund Hamilton Sears (1850)
Music by Richard Storrs Willis, 1819–1900 (1850)
PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

from Luke 1 and 2

M: Sovereign Lord, You have done what You have promised.
Now dismiss Your servants in peace. For our eyes have
seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the sight
of all people. Being delivered, may we serve You with fear,
in righteousness and holiness all our days.



Song lyrics reproduced by permission: **CCL#11181050**

Scripture text from

The Holy Bible, **English Standard Version**.

©2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

Holy Bible, **New International Version**®, NIV®

Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.

Used by permission. All rights reserved.



A NOTE ABOUT GIVING

Please make sure that checks are made out to
Ascension Presbyterian Church
and that any automatic payments are being sent
to the **P.O. Box mailing address** listed.

STAFF & LEADERSHIP

PASTOR:

Rev. Nate Hitchcock *nate@ascension-pca.org*

PASTOR EMERITUS:

Rev. Ed Volz *volz.edw@gmail.com*

OFFICE MANAGER:

Rina Kroes *office@ascension-pca.org*

ELDERS:

Brett Chase *brett@ascension-pca.org*

C.J. DeGroot *cjdegroot@ascension-pca.org*

Chris Sledge *chris@ascension-pca.org*

Philip Suh *philipsuh@ascension-pca.org*

Theo Vander Wel *theo@ascension-pca.org*

DEACONS:

Kyle Bartlett *kyle@ascension-pca.org*

Mike Wheeler *mike@ascension-pca.org*

HOSPITALITY COORDINATOR:

Monica Sledge *cmkesledge@gmail.com*

MEAL COORDINATOR:

Sheila Bloedow *s.bloedow@comcast.net*

NURSERY COORDINATOR:

Rebecca Wheeler *rwheeler2022@outlook.com*

MEDIA (SOUND & PROJECTION):

Dave Ball *dave@daveball.net*



ASCENSION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

ASCENSION-PCA.ORG

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

9:00AM: Discipleship Hour

Meeting Address: 8224 220th Street SW, Edmonds, WA 98026

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 838, Lynnwood, WA 98046

APC Office: Mon & Wed & Fri (9:00AM–5:00PM)
(425) 286-8617 *office@ascension-pca.org*