

DECEMBER 2023 WORSHIP GUIDE

CHERRYVALE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - 709 CHERRY HILL DR, STAUNTON VA - 540 885 0098

This booklet contains the outline for each worship service during the month of December 2023. Sunday worship is in person, online and broadcast on the radio (you can listen in your car on FM 87.9, in the church parking lot). If you are not able to attend in person, you can watch online on our website and YouTube channel. Even if we are not worshipping in the same building, we are still one body, one family, we are brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. Look up the scriptures referenced in the following pages; pray the words, and claim the promises for you and your family. - Pastor Jonathan

December Worship

Worship Dec 3

Scriptures to read and meditate on

Isa 64:1-9; Ps 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Cor 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

Call To Worship - Lighting the Advent Candle

In the days of exile and uncertainty, the prophet Isaiah cried out: O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence. As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you! For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you. (Isaiah 64:1-3). In the midst of our own encounters with uncertainty and upheaval and our longing for deliverance, Jesus calls to us, "Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come" (Mark 13:35). We wait as people surprised again and again by God who shakes us out of our complacency and wakes us up to the work of God's kingdom all around us. We light this candle as a sign of our shocking hope. May we stay awake to God's activity in the world as we wait in expectation that even now God is with us, working to restore us to the fullness of life with God and one another. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

We confess that we are not ready. We call on you to tear the heavens and come down, and yet we aren't ready for you to rend our hearts and enter in. When it comes to meeting you face-to-face, we hesitate. We fear what you will find in us and among us. We are uncertain that we really want our lives to be turned upside down by the good news. We want the hope that comes with knowing you are coming to us, but we're not sure we're ready for the shock of that hope. Forgive us, we pray. Free us from our fear that we might joyfully live in the hope that shakes us up and turns us around to follow you.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of peace and justice, we thank you for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit working to bring forth the day that Isaiah saw in his heart when swords are pounded into plowshares. Bless these gifts we give this morning, may they be used to make human hearts ready for peace and for the reign of your Son. In his holy name, we pray. Amen.

Worship Dec 10

Scriptures to read and meditate on

Isa 40:1-11; Ps 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Pet 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

Call To Worship - Lighting the Advent Candle

In days when God's people longed for peace, Isaiah declared, "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry 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" (Isaiah 40:1). We who gather today also seek comfort and peace, yet we are unsatisfied with ideas of peace that tell us to keep quiet and go with the flow. We long for real peace, true peace, just peace. We wait as people who yearn for peace that bears the fruit of community, equity, and flourishing for all. We light these candles as signs of God's shocking hope and just peace. May they be beacons calling us to repent and to live the good news of Jesus Christ as we wait and watch and labor for the day when all people can gather together to worship and glorify God. Amen.

Continued on back page

December 17 Darkness to Light Lessons and Carols, and December 24 Candlelight booklet enclosed.

Find the **32 bold** words or phrases from the Hymn,
In The Bleak Midwinter

In the **bleak** midwinter, **frosty wind** made **moan**,
earth stood **hard as iron**, water like a **stone**;
snow had **fallen**, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak **midwinter**, long ago.

Our God, **heaven** cannot hold him,
nor earth **sustain**;
heaven and earth **shall flee away**
when he comes to **reign**.

In the bleak midwinter a **stable place** sufficed
the **Lord God Almighty**, Jesus Christ.

Angels and **archangels** may
have **gathered** there,
cherubim and **seraphim** thronged the air;
but his **mother** only, in her **maiden bliss**,
worshipped the **beloved** with a **kiss**.

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a **shepherd**, I would **bring a lamb**;
if I were a **Wise Man**, I would **do my part**;
yet what I can I **give him**: give **my heart**.

Christmas Carol - Word Search

Just for fun, or use as a teaching aide with your younger family members.

C X K Z O C G B L L E G F Y S Y I W B P F R E H T O M F L R
X V N J Y Q L K F A S H I H B T S M H P S R R Q H H O T U V
K E O E N G I E R L P G A J B H E Y Q A X N O R I S A D R A
X P L Q H H P T E M A L C I Q G K C M D T H W S C H N S M E
L Q V T H C H G C K L F H P Q I R P G E I C C I T A Z A L A
W P S M E Q N C A F Y J E P Y M S E V P K E A B I Y T N F P
A A U J Y A N Z L M P H R K Q L Q W J P L N C N W E W L H N
Y W S J E P M E I E E I U H V A I J X I I T C A I C S I G Y
W Q T O L X E H G V Z D B W Z D K B D H R J P S L B M A N H
O J A N D A R P E U O X I C X O D X J S D Z O U T P L V D D
V D I M W C V Y E L A H M Z S G K O H R T O V E K A E F U F
B T N A K V T S H T C G C O P D G M N O W R W L M N Q L R R
A D Y F V K M H S Q G G Z D R R Z N F W O J A B T J M X B N
H W Q E B G V M E I P P Q I E O E U K C D N T P H W H P T A
J T A F E F O Z J U L L J J Q L M S P U H N I O Y E T M J S
U E W V Q H D J L F W B E H X Z Q N C G Y H J D S M A X G Y
H S N M I D W I N T E R N H V P E P P M L R P S B D O V T P
S C K O N H G D C P V G W E C B X L B I Q E C D N F Q D E O
H Y R P T A B A P Q Z G E M D I D R S H W T E L I M L J G N
A H T H W S T H T B N A M E S I W B H E N B D G Y T J J B T
N V U H E U G P V H S P O A O L A L E V C G S Y F Q H A S Z
Z H L G H R D I L H E L U B K U H M P I N N O Z T M V K C J
U L C T P F B S W U C R Q F P F C Q H G Q A Y M E I A K A C
Q M X W G M U L W B I F E J T F R S E N B L D U Y S W K M C
F V W R W G C M G Z P Q I D W N G P R V D V O L D D O A N X
B B T H B C Q U R Y A R Z N E I X I D E J W W L Y J I B S S
I D V O H D Y L C E J Y Q O M Q P L S T M V Y R B Z S D W O
M C Y B M I Z L K F Y Z G C I G H M K J O W U R Z B F N W D
M U W W O U H Q C D B T S J V E U Y J T R Z O K M X S U J Q
B R M J R D G Q V A R C H A N G E L S E Z Q U V Z Y R D M U

December Worship

Worship Dec 10 continued

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, in your gracious presence we confess our sin and the sin of this world. Although Christ is among us as our peace, we are a people divided against ourselves as we cling to the values of a broken world. The profit and pleasures we pursue lay waste the land and pollute the seas. The fears and jealousies that we harbor set neighbor against neighbor and nation against nation. We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom, of intellect and reason, and have turned them into bonds of oppression. Lord, have mercy upon us; heal and forgive us. Set us free to serve you in the world as agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Almighty God, we enter this season from a chaotic world filled with violence, division, and injustice. We hear your prophet Isaiah promising comfort, then John the Baptist calling us to construction projects. We are reminded we are called to prepare the way, to be the engineers of peace, the builders of justice, the producers of kindness. As we bring our tithes and offerings to you, we pray that our giving continues to point to the Christ who comes in love and compassion. May our giving in this season reflect our hope for the promised kingdom to reign in our world. We pray this in the name of the Messiah, Jesus our Savior. Amen.

Worship Dec 24

Scriptures to read and meditate on

2 Sam 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55; Rom 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

Call To Worship - Lighting the Advent Candle

When God's people were surrounded by hardship, suffering, and grief, Isaiah proclaimed: 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; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to 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 (Isaiah 61:1-3a). We come today as people who are also surrounded by suffering and grief. And yet, the Spirit hovers among us, tending and anointing, inspiring freedom where there is captivity, declaring blessing in places the world has cursed, and igniting fierce joy where mourning and heartache prevail. We wait as people who experience hardship and pain, yet we are called to witness to the persistent joy that sustains our life as God's people. We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, just peace, and fierce joy. May our lives shine with the fierce, transforming love, and tenacious joy of the Light who lives in our hearts as we wait and work for the coming of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Loving God, even in the midst of this season of goodwill, there is much to confess. In spite of holiday cheer, stress and anxiety rule our lives. We miss the reason for the season, focusing instead on Christmas parties, long to-do lists, and trying to get the shopping done. We fail to think about your reordered world, a world where the lowly are lifted up and the hungry are filled with good things. Help us adjust our Christmas priorities, that we might join with you, O God, in preparing a world that welcomes the One who brings us joy.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Generous God, as we bring our gifts to you this day, we acknowledge that we have been given so much by your goodness, but we have been tight-fisted and slow in giving to help others. In this Advent season of preparation, we ask you to help us live in a new way, to walk a new highway, to set ourselves on the path that leads to a closer walk with Jesus, our example and redeemer. May this be the season when he finds the highways to our hearts prepared for his coming as we give out of the joy we have in you. In the name of the one who brings us our joy, Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Worship Dec 31

Scriptures to read and meditate on

Isa 61:10-62:3; Ps 148; Gal 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

Our worship service on Dec 31 will be a service of Christmas carols. If you cannot join us in person or online, we encourage you to spend time reflecting on the birth of our Savior, reading the scriptures above and maybe sing a carol or two yourself. Merry Christmas and Blessings for 2024.