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Welcome & News

Kimber Malinowsky

[Please refer to the back of the bulletin for “Our Life in Community” news, and do share it with your family and friends]

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† **Opening Hymn #203**

“Hail to the LORD’s Anointed” [v.v. 1, 2]

EELACOMBE

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† **Call to Worship**

Kimber Malinowsky

We come to glorify God, to rejoice in the One who saves us.

God comes, so we might believe, so we might be blessed.

Our hearts leap for joy! For God is coming to us in a child.

God comes for those who hunger for hope, for those who thirst for grace.

Holy is the One who comes in God’s name, who fulfills every promise of God.

God comes to walk with those who follow in faith, to bring peace to a shattered world.

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no Adult Sunday School

Prayer for Glenora McClay Marlene’s sister
Joan’s sister

Prayer of Invocation

Pastor Alex

[excerpt from The Ninth Duino Elegy—by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by Stephen Mitchell]

<http://www.desertlotuszen.org/the-ninth-duino-elegy.html>

For when the traveler returns from the mountain-slopes into the valley,
he brings, not a handful of earth, unsayable to others, but instead
some word he has gained, some pure word, the yellow and blue
gentian. Perhaps we are here in order to say: house,
bridge, fountain, gate, pitcher, fruit-tree, window -
at most: column, tower... But to say them, you must understand,

oh to say them more intensely than the Things themselves
 ever dreamed of existing. Isn't the secret intent
 of this taciturn earth, when it forces lovers together,
 that inside their boundless emotion all things may shudder with joy?
 Threshold: what it means for two lovers
 to be wearing down, imperceptibly, the ancient threshold of their door -
 they too, after the many who came before them
 and before those to come..., lightly.

Here is the time for the sayable, here is its homeland.
 Speak and bear witness. More than ever
 the Things that we might experience are vanishing, for
 what crowds them out and replaces them is an imageless act.
 An act under a shell, which easily cracks open as soon as
 the business inside outgrows it and seeks new limits.

let us pray..

*O God of Elizabeth and Mary,
 you visited your servants with news
 of the world's redemption in the coming of the Savior.
 Now we ask you to make our hearts leap with joy,
 and fill our mouths with songs of blessing and praise,
 that we may announce glad tidings of peace,
 and welcome the Christ in our midst.
 Amen.*

adapted from <http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/prayers.php?id=98>

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Hymn of Praise#203

"Hail to the LORD's Anointed" [v.v. 3, 4]

EELACOMBE

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Lighting of the Advent Candle of Hope, Peace and Joy Adrienne & Steve, Elizabeth Kern

Today is the fourth Sunday in Advent
and our preparations are almost complete for the coming of Jesus.

We light a candle each week to remind us
that Jesus brings light into the dark places of the world.

We light the candle of hope
to proclaim that God's light is coming into the world.

[a purple candle is lit]

We light the candle of peace to proclaim that God's promises
will be fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ - Prince of Peace .

[a purple candle is lit]

We light the candle of joy
to celebrate that God's saving power is coming into the world.

[the pink candle is lit]

**God of hope, peace, joy,
we eagerly await the birth of Jesus,
Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, God-With-Us.**

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Anthem

"Advent Message" by Martin How

Chancel Choir

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PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

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Sung Prayer for Illumination #206 "I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light" [v.v. 2, 3]

HOUSTON

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† **Gospel Reading**

Kimber Malinowsky

Luke 1:46-47 The Message (MSG) & v.v. 48-55 Cotemporary English Version (CEV)

[adapted with inclusive language]

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%201:46-55>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A48-55&version=CEV>

46-47 And Mary said,
I'm bursting with God-news;
I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.

48-55 [God] **cares for me,**
[God's] humble servant.
From now on,
all people will say
God has blessed me.
God All-Powerful **has done**
great things for me,
and [God's] name is holy.
He always **shows mercy**
to everyone who worships him.

[God] has used God's powerful arm
to **scatter those who are proud.**

God **drags strong rulers**
from their thrones

and **puts humble people**
in places of power.

God **gives the hungry**
good things to eat,
and sends the rich away
with nothing.

God **helps** his servant Israel
and **is always merciful**

to [God's] people.
 [God] **made this promise**
 to our ancestors,
 to Abraham and his family
 forever!

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Children's Message

"God's chosen"

Pastor Alex

[adapted from post by Carolyn Brown on worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com]

[All children are invited to proceed to Sunday School for lessons on Luke 2:1-7 "The Birth of Jesus"]

He, Qi. The Visitation, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=46125> [retrieved June 21, 2012].

Micah 5:2-5a

Point to Bethlehem on a map. Describe it as a very small town. Compare it to a small town in your area. Then, especially if you preached on it during the summer, recall King David. Briefly retell the story of Samuel going at God's direction to *little no-place Bethlehem* to find the next king and then going through 7 big brothers before calling in the baby brother who had been left tending the sheep and anointing him king. Then with a laugh say, "Guess what? It happened again." Describe how Mary and Joseph end up not just in Bethlehem, but in a barn in Bethlehem on a forced trip to pay hated taxes. The point is that God shows up in some surprising places - even in Bethlehem. So, we should expect to find God at work in surprising places today too. God even shows up at school, at your house, while you are on a holiday trip..... Thank God for being with us and challenge worshipers to watch for God at work all around them.

***No matter who you are or where you are, remember that God is with you.
 God loves you. God has big plans for you!***

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Reflecting on God's Message

"Agape"

Pastor Alex

*The God who is loved in prayer
 is the God present in the world,
 most especially in those who suffer.
 The suffering can be various:
 material poverty, political oppression,*

*living a lie rather than one's true self,
the effects of national political decisions with regard to war, peace and justice.*

*Suffering is universal
and thus committed compassionate love
is never a stranger to the problems of one's time.*

~ Great Mystics and Social Justice, Susan Rakoczy

Filia, Eros, Agape

"If you take the 'love your enemy' out of Christianity, you've 'unChristianed' the Christian faith,"
~ Miroslav Volf.

It is not by means of abstract analysis concerning the nature of God and human beings
that we come to understand the nature of Jesus, the Man-God.

Rather by seeing, imitating and deciphering Jesus,
by living together with him, we come to know God and human beings.

The God who in and through Jesus reveals himself is human.
And the human being who emerges in and through Jesus is divine.

~ [Jesus Christ Liberator, Leonardo Boff](#)

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Hymn of Response #572

"Pass It On" [v.v. 1, 3]

PASS IT ON

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Prayers of the People

[Prayers of the People, concluding with...]

***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.***

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Invitation to Offering [adapted from quote by Dietrich Bonhoeffer]

“A blessing is the visible,
perceptible, effective proximity of God.
A blessing demands to be passed on...
To be blessed is to be oneself a blessing.”

Let us give...

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Offering of Tithes & Gifts

“Candle of Peace” arr. by V.C. Johnson

Duet sung by Denise DelMastro and Kimber Malinowski

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† **Doxology** [IN UNISON] #94

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!***

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Offertory Prayer []

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GOING FORTH

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† **Closing Hymn #160**

"Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart" [v.v. 4, 5]

MARION

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[Slide + VIDEO Slide]† **Commission, Benediction & Passing of the Peace**

121315-B-Advent+3-Liturgy-Alex da Silva-Souto

[video: *TWOTP*, text by Kelly Ann Hall, music by The Brilliance.]

[adapted from post by Carolyn Brown on worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com]

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com/2015/07/year-c-fourth-sunday-of-advent-december.html>

[an acolyte lights a candle from the fourth candle in the wreath and carries it out the central aisle]

As you go out into the world this week before Christmas,
rejoice in the Lord for God has done and is doing marvelous things!
Remember that God works with people like Mary and Elizabeth and us
to do these marvelous things.

Go in peace, because just as God was with Mary and Elizabeth,
God is with each of us today and every day.

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Postlude "With Trumpets and Horns" by Handel, arr. E. Broughton, from "Water Music"

Zoe Vandermeer

cover collage: Thanks-Giving Chapel, Dallas, Texas, 1976 by Phillip Johnson (1906-2005), stained glass design by Gabriel Loire.