

Calvary Church

A Reconciling Congregation



*“A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness
prepare the way of the HOLY ONE,
make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.’”*

- Isaiah 40:3

December 24, 2023
4th Sunday of Advent

CELEBRATION OF WORSHIP

Nurturing Resilience, Practicing Active Hope

GATHERING

Gathering Song: "Waiting for You" (*The Many*)

Welcome & Announcements

(also available at allmeansall.org/announcements)

- **Advent 2023:** Dec 3: Coming from Gratitude / Dec 10: Honoring Our Pain for the World / Dec 17: Seeing with New Eyes / Dec 24: Going Forth
- **Adult Ed Book Study:** *Poverty*, by America
 - Lenten study to begin week of Feb 18 – timing TBD by participants
 - allmeansall.org/adult-ed
- **Bible Study:** taking book/theme suggestions!
 - Spring 2024 – timing TBD by participants
 - allmeansall.org/bible-study
- **Spring Retreat:** June 7-8/9 (location TBD)
- **New Sanctuary Movement:** collecting new and gently used sweatshirts (S/M/L) and tennis shoes/sneakers (women's 5-9 / men's 7-11)
- **Previous sermons:** allmeansall.org/sermons
- **Previous bulletins:** allmeansall.org/bulletins

Calendar

Today, Dec 24: 4th Sunday of Advent / Christmas Eve

- **7 pm:** Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols (*hybrid*)
 - allmeansall.org/christmas

Monday, Dec 25: MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Tuesday, Dec 26, 12-1 pm: Midweek Prayer (*virtual*)

- allmeansall.org/midweek-prayer

Sunday, Dec 31, 11:15 am-12:45 pm: Hybrid Worship (*1st Sunday after Christmas*)

- no sermon and lots of Christmas carols!

Wednesday, Jan 3, 7:30-8:30ish pm: Spirituality on Tap

- Gojjo / 4540 Baltimore Ave
- allmeansall.org/spirituality-on-tap

Sunday, Jan 7: Epiphany Sunday

- **11:15 am-12:45 pm:** Hybrid Worship, with Communion
- **8-9 pm:** Online Advent/Christmas Retreat – Spiritual Reflection Group (*virtual*)
 - allmeansall.org/spiritual-reflection-group

Visiting With Us?

We're glad you're here, for whatever reason you chose to join us! We strive to make our worship space (in-person and virtual) as welcoming and accommodating of different needs as possible. If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions, please contact Pastor Tim.

Calvary Email List

If you're not on the Calvary email list and want to be, or think you are but aren't seeing emails from us, please contact the church office or sign up online. Our **Calvary Connections e-newsletter** goes out every Thursday night.

CENTERING & CONNECTING

Breathing Our Way In / Breath Prayer

Singing Our Way In: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (*UMH #211, tune: trad. French / lyrics: various*)

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show
and cause us in her ways to go. (*refrain*)

O come, thou Root of Jesse's tree,
an ensign of thy people be;
before thee rulers silent fall;
all peoples on thy mercy call.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thy justice here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight. *(refrain)*

Call to Worship / Lighting the Advent Candle (Jon Humphries,
Susan Wickham – adapted)

One: God of hope, peace, joy and love, we wait. We
remember. We ready ourselves. We pray.

ALL (sung): O come, o come, Emmanuel ...

One: We have prayed for hope, peace and joy. As we
light this candle, we pray love. Love for others. Love for
self. Love for family. Love for friends. Love for neighbors.

ALL (sung): O come, o come, Emmanuel ...

One: Love for strangers. Love for enemies. Love for the
lonely. Love for the lost. Love for the sick. Love for those
left out.

ALL (sung): O come, o come, Emmanuel ...

One: Love for the world. Love for Creation. Love for all.
Love for life. Love for you.

**ALL (sung): Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to us
and in our hearts will dwell.**

One: Alleluia!

ALL: Alleluia!

Opening Song: "Christmas Come Close" (*tune: Lim Swee
Hong / lyrics: Shirley Erena Murray*)

Christmas come close in a child's crumpled face,
to the ragged and raw in a harsh birthing place,
in a surging of joy, in a bundle held tight,
in a breath, in a cry through the dark of the night.

Christmas come close to the place where we are,
in our longing for peace, for a sign, for a star,
for a certainty born in uncertainty's space,
for a mystery grasped that our blindness can trace.

Christmas come close to the world that is bleak,
giving hope a new home, making prophecy speak:
so the angels will sing, and the wise will be heard,
and the powers will take heed of this child and his word.

Christmas come close into focus and frame,
to humanity's heart for the child to make claim:
for the poor to be served, for the rich to kneel low,
for Magnificat now in the Christmas we know.

Offering Ourselves & Our Gifts / Passing the Peace

One: The peace of God be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

GROUNDING

Community Prayer *(Kate Compston – adapted)*

Thank you, Scandalous God, for giving yourself to the world; not in the powerful and extraordinary, but in weakness and the familiar: in a baby; in bread and wine. Thank you for offering, at journey's end, a new beginning; for setting, in the poverty of a manger, the richest jewel of your love; for revealing, in a particular place, your light for all the world; for turning us, and turning with us, toward a new way. Thank you for bringing us to Bethlehem, House of Bread, where the empty are filled, and the filled are emptied; where the poor find riches, and the rich recognize their poverty; where all who kneel and hold out their hands are unstintingly fed. Amen.

Silent Prayer

Special Music

Scripture Lesson: Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. **2** Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from God's hand double for all her sins. **3** A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the HOLY ONE, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. **5** Then the glory of the HOLY ONE shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the HOLY ONE has spoken."

6 A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. **7** The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the HOLY ONE blows upon it; surely the people are grass. **8** The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. **9** Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" **10** See, the HOLY ONE comes with might, and God's arm rules for God; God's reward is with God, and God's recompense before God. **11** God will feed God's flock like a shepherd; God will gather the lambs in God's arms, and carry them in God's bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Choral Alleluia

Scripture Lesson: Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. **2** As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; **3** the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Holy One, make God's paths straight,'" **4** John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness,

proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **5** And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. **6** Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. **7** He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. **8** I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

One: The word of God for the people of God.

ALL: Thanks be to God!

Choral Alleluia

Sermon: "Going Forth"

Song: "Canticle of the Turning" (*tune: trad. Irish / lyrics: Rory Cooney*)

My soul cries out with a joyful shout
that the God of my heart is great,
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things
that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,
and my weakness you did not spurn,
so from east to west shall my name be blest,
could the world be about to turn?

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring,
let the fires of your justice burn.**

**Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn!**

Though I am small, my God, my all,
You work great things in me.
And your mercy will last from the depths of the past
to the end of the age to be.

Your very name puts the proud to shame,
and to those who would for you yearn,
You will show your might, put the strong to flight,
for the world is about to turn. (*refrain*)

From the halls of power to the fortress tower,
not a stone will be left on stone.

Let the king beware for your justice tears
ev'ry tyrant from his throne.

The hungry poor shall weep no more,
for the food they can never earn;
there are tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed,
for the world is about to turn.

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring,
let the fires of your justice burn.**

**Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn!**

Though the nations rage from age to age,
we remember who holds us fast;

God's mercy must deliver us
from the conqueror's crushing grasp.

This saving word that our forebears heard
is the promise which holds us bound,

'til the spear and rod be crushed by God,
who is turning the world around. (*refrain*)

SHARING

Prayers of the People / Joys & Concerns

“Thanks be to God” or “God, hear our prayer”

Sung Response (*tune: UMH #294, Hugh Wilson / lyrics: John Pritchard*)

O coming Christ, to you we pray,
to you hearts open wide.

Your justice bring, to wounds healing;
in joy let all abide.

ENGAGING

Closing Song: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (*UMH #230, tune: Lewis H. Redner / lyrics: Phillips Brooks – adapted*)

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;
above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.

Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.

O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King
and peace to all the earth!

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given;
so God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of God's heaven.

No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in,
be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
(Jesus), Emmanuel.

Benediction

Singing Our Way Out: "Let the Church Say Amen" (*Andraé Crouch*)

Let the church say, "Amen" (*repeat*)

God has spoken, let the church say, "Amen"

Calvary United Methodist Church

at the intersection of 48th & Baltimore / spirituality & justice

801 S. 48th Street / Philadelphia, PA 19143

215.724.1702 / office@allmeansall.org / **allmeansall.org**

Pastor Tim Emmett-Rardin: pastortim@allmeansall.org

(in case of pastoral emergency: 215.370.7411)

Norris Person (accompanist): music@allmeansall.org