



"From Generation to Generation"

Week 3, December 11, 2022: "We Can Choose a Better Way"

Gathering Music

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

Pam McConnell & Sarah Rodocker

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Worship Leader: Over a hundred people, from the ages of two to eighty years old, were asked the question, "What brings you joy?" From the voices of different generations, hear their answers:

Adult: A clean kitchen.

Older Adult: Sand between my toes.

Child: Being outside.

Teenager: Sleeping in my own bed after a night away.

Adult: Having a camera in my hands.

Older Adult: My partner's laugh.

Teenager: Mountain air.

Child: When my parents pick me up.

Adult: The end of my to-do list.

Older Adult: Hugs from my niece and nephew.

Teenager: Baby giggles.

Child: My cat.

Adult: Putting my hands in the garden.

Older Adult: A chord resolved.

Teenager: Stargazing.

Child: Bedtime books.

Adult: A warm cup of coffee with friends.

Older Adult: My new granddaughter.

Teenager: Lingering at the table after dinner.

Child: Time with family.

Teenager: Today we light the candle of joy. May its light remind us of all the good news this season brings. May its light remind us of the many sources of joy in our lives, and may that joy not only draw us closer to one another, but closer to God.

Another worship leader or reader lights the candle.

Teenager: Family of faith, what brings you joy? Amen.

Special Music

Christmas Rejoicing

Handbell Choir

Hymn

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

UMH 206, v. 1

I want to walk as a child of the light.
I want to follow Jesus.
God set the stars to give light to the world.
The star of my life is Jesus.

Refrain

In him there is no darkness at all.
The night and the day are both alike.
The Lamb is the light of the city of God.
Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

Call to Confession/Prayer of Confession/Words of Forgiveness

call to confession

A series of experiments by Princeton psychologists, Janine Willis and Alexander Todorov, taught the world that it only takes a *tenth* of a second for us to form an impression of a stranger. In other words, it only takes a tenth of a second for us to look at someone's face and determine a stereotype about who they are.

With decisions happening *that* quickly, it is not hard to imagine why we might need this moment of confession.

The prayer of confession is an opportunity to slow down. We take that tenth of a second and give it room to breathe. We reflect on the decisions that we've made this past week and we ask for God's mercy to be in all of them.

And without fail, God wiggles God's self into the cracks of our lives, and we are made better for it. So, with that confidence, let us go to God in prayer:

prayer of confession

God of mercy, a million times a day we have the opportunity to be gracious, to assume the best in others, to give the benefit of the doubt. A million times a day we could choose the better way, but so often we don't. Fear and greed kick in. Assumptions and insecurities take the wheel. Comparison and critique lead the charge. Forgive us for forgetting that we are descendants of Joseph. Forgive us for forgetting that grace and mercy are in our blood. Forgive us for forgetting that all belong to you. Give us the courage to love even bigger than before, and the wisdom to choose a better way. Amen.

words of forgiveness

Family of Faith, hear this good news: We who have chosen wrong, are given a second chance. We who have lost our way, are welcomed into community. We who feel alone, are seen, held, and known.

This is the good news of the gospel. No matter how many times we choose wrong or lose our way, God continues to be a God of second chances, community, and love. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Special Music

Born a Mighty King

Chancel Choir

Children's Time

Praise Song

He Shall Reign

Youth Praise Team

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of God appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by God through the prophet:

²³ "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of God commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

Special Music

Christmas Medley

**Megan Forbes &
Nathan Pennington**

Sermon

**"From Generation to Generation: We Can Choose a Better Way"
Rev. Dr. Mary Kay Totty**

Response to the Word, Affirmation of Faith

We believe in a God who offers second chances and does not hold grudges. We believe in a God who opens the door to new life and leaves the porch light on for us when we get lost. We believe in a God who believes in us—

believes that we can make a difference, that we can choose grace over comparison, love over hate, peace over war. And so we strive to live our lives in love. We strive to listen as Joseph listened, and to be the people that God calls us to be. It's all that easy, and it's all that hard. This we believe. Amen.

Special Music

Breath of Heaven

**Sarah & Avery Rodocker
& SUMC Liturgical Dancers**

The Prayers of the People

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer & The Lord's Prayer

**Offering
Offertory**

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

Handbell Choir

Doxology

UMH 95

Prayer of Dedication

God of Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow having blessed us with time, talent, and treasure, we in turn are to bless others in our stewardship of all you entrust to us. Receive the financial offerings we make and put them to good use. Amen.

Special Music

A Tapestry of Joyful Carols

Chancel Choir

Sending Forth

Praise Song

Canticle of the Turning

Praise Team

Benediction

Passing of the Peace of Christ

Postlude

Pam McConnell & Sarah Rodocker