

Wesley United Methodist Church

Serving the Community with Faith & Love Since 1927!

Rev. Nizzi Santos Digan, Pastor & Spiritual Director

10:00 AM Sunday Worship

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025

At Wesley United Methodist Church, we foster a sanctuary culture by creating a safe environment where all feel welcomed, loved, accepted, valued, and affirmed for who they are, through intentional practices such as empathy, compassion, generosity, hospitality, and inclusion.

Please let an usher know if you have questions, need assistance, or have a concern about health or safety.



Please Stand in Body or in Spirit When You See the *

Prelude

In The Bleak Mid-Winter

Ronna Davis, organ
Gustav Holst, composer

Welcome

Pastor Nizzi

Centering

Wait for the Lord

Peter Hansen
Taizé Community

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord: keep watch, take heart.

***Call to Worship**

One: This is the fourth Sunday of Advent, a time to rejoice in the wondrous things that God is doing.

ALL: Our hearts are filled with the hope that is coming into the world.

One: The time is fast approaching—not only for parties and presents, but especially for remembering God’s loving gift to us: the Christ Child

ALL: Help slow us down, Lord, that we may realize that Your gift of Love is at the center of our lives and our celebrations.

One: Thanks be to God who again reminds us of God’s Eternal Love.

ALL: Open our hearts, O Lord, to receive your Blessed Gift. Amen.

***Opening Hymn/Processional**

Lift Up Your Heads

UMH 213

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates;
behold, the King of glory waits;
the King of kings is drawing near;
the Savior of the world is here!

Fling wide the portals of your heart;
make it a temple, set apart
from earthly use for heaven's employ,
adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come, with us abide;
our hearts to thee we open wide;
let us thy inner presence feel;
thy grace and love in us reveal.

Thy Holy Spirit lead us on
until our glorious goal is won;
eternal praise, eternal fame
be offered, Savior, to thy name!

***Praise Songs**

Joy Like a River

Joy like a river in my soul...

I Have Joy in My Heart

I have joy in my heart, deep, deep down in my heart...

Jesus gave to me, and no one can destroy it.

I have joy in my heart; deep, deep down in my heart...

Opening Prayer

O Shining One, from the rising of the midwinter sun to its setting, scatter the darkness with the Light of Your Love.

Make me short on mean thoughts, long on offering words of comfort.

Make me short on being driven, long on paying attention.

Make me short on focusing only on my own, long on looking beyond.

Make me short on obsessive lists, long on spontaneous acts of kindness.

Make me short on mindless activity, long on time to reflect.

Make me short on tradition as habit, long on re-discovery and re-owning.

Make me short on rushing and tiring, long on walking and wondering.

Make me short on false festive jollity, long on stilling and rooted joy.

Make me short on guilt, long on being merciful to myself.

Make me short on being overwhelmed, long on peaceableness as I set forth this day.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

(Moment of Silence for Personal Confession)

Assurance of Pardon

God Is Forgiveness

Debbie O'Driscoll

God is forgiveness. Dare to forgive and God will be with you.

God is forgiveness. Love and do not fear.

Advent Candle Liturgy

United Women in Faith/Missions

Reader 1: Today we encounter the unsettling mystery of Advent: an unmarried Mary carrying the Son of God; a vulnerable Savior growing in her womb; Joseph wrestling with the thought of leaving her.

Reader 2: God's love moves in ways that defy social expectations; and calls for Mary and Joseph to choose courage and faithfulness, even at the risk of shame.

ALL: **With Mary and Joseph, we choose to wait, watch, and listen to the way of Love instead of responding in fear to the world's judgment.**

Reader 3: We light this candle of love as a sign of our faithfulness as we seek, find, and follow Emmanuel, God with us.

Reader 4: In Jesus, Love is revealed.

[Light the fourth candle of the Advent wreath.]

Musical Response *Light the Advent Candle v. 4* TFWs 2090

Light the Advent candle four, think of Joy forever more
Christ Child in a stable born Gift of Love that Christmas morn.
Candle, candle burning bright, shining in the cold winter night
Candle, candle burning bright Fill our hearts with Christmas light.

Time for the Child in Each of Us Pastor Nizzi

Thank you, Jesus & Light of the World is Jesus

Call to Prayer *O Little Town of Bethlehem v.4* UMH 230

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, our Lord Emmanuel!

Prayers of the People Pastor Nizzi

The Lord's Prayer

(You are invited to pray in the language of your choice to celebrate our diversity.)

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.

Response *Three-fold Amen (Danish)* UMH 898

Amen, amen, amen

***New Testament & Gospel Reading**

Matthew 1:18-25 - Our God Near at Hand

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. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord 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. She will bear a Son, and you are to name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name Him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a Son, and He named Him Jesus. This is the Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Anthem

Chancel Choir

The Angel Gabriel

Gerald Near, composer

The Angel Gabriel from heaven came, his wings as drifted show, his eyes as flame;
“All hail,” said he, “thou lowly maiden Mary, most highly favored lady.”

Gloria!

“For now a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honor thee,
Thy Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold, most highly favored lady.”

Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
“To me be as it pleaseth God”, she said,
“My soul shall laud and magnify his holy Name.”

Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ was born in Bethlehem all on a Christmas morn,
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say:

“Most highly favored lady.”

Gloria!

Message

Love That Stays

Rev. Nizzi Digan

The Offering & Offertory Music

Ghanaian Choir

For Your blessings in my life

James Varrick Armaah, composer

For your blessings in my life, your glory will never fade away
Your glory will never fade away, Saviour.
For your blessings in my life, how can I repay you?
Your glory will never fade away, Lord of grace.

What song shall I sing? What dance shall I dance?
What words can I express, Lord of grace?
For your blessings in my life, how can I repay you?
I will praise you without end, Lord of grace.

***Advent Doxology**

Tune: VENI EMMANUEL

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel.

***Prayer of Dedication**

Pastor Nizzi

***Passing of Peace**

Shalom

Mensah Essilfie, composer

God's peace be unto you,
We wish you Shalom!
The peace of God which transcends all
understanding be with you forevermore.

Announcements

*Closing Hymn/Recessional

In the Bleak Midwinter

UMH 221

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, not 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,
worshiped 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.

*Benediction

*Benediction Response

Congregation

May the grace and peace of Christ be with you, my friends.
Go and share the love of God, love that never ends.

Postlude

In Excelsis Deo

Ronna Davis, organ

Lee Ellis, composer

Worship Leaders: Matt Crane (liturgist), Tessa Burke (acolyte), David Dagle,
Ronna Davis, Deborah O'Driscoll, Antonio Paredes, David Potts,
Jennifer Quansah, Gary Robinson, Scott Shackett (acolyte), Chris Yeboah,
Chancel Choir, Ghanaian Choir, Worship Tech Team

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Advent Candle Liturgy is from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/>.
The Call to Worship is from ministrymatters.com.
The Opening Prayer is from *The Celtic Wheel of the Year* by Tess Ward

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