

# Welcome to Elizabethtown United Methodist Church



Sunday, December 17, 2023

## **Greeting and Announcements**

### **Centering Words**

#### **\*Call to Worship<sup>1</sup> (Leader part, Congregation part)**

When the Lord restores our fortunes,  
**we are like those who dream.**

Our mouths are filled with laughter,  
**our hearts sing with shouts of joy.**

Worship the Lord of our salvation.

**Worship the Lord!**

#### **Opening Prayer<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Lighting of Advent Candle (Leader, Congregation)**

Reader 1: 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).

Reader 2: 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.

**Congregation: 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.**

Reader 1: We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, just peace, and fierce joy. May our lives shine with the fierce, 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.

*Light three candles of the Advent wreath.*

**\*Opening Hymn**

*UMH #216*

*Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

Prayer of Yearning (Unison)

**Merciful God, we hear John's fervent cry: "Make straight the way of the Lord," but we don't know what we should do.**

**Our lives carry on as they have before.**

**Nothing seems to change.**

**Yet we long to be caught up in the ecstatic visions of prophets and mystics.**

**We yearn to tune our ears to the heralds who testify to your light.**

**Help us walk in the ways that lead to life, through  
Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen**

Words of Assurance<sup>1</sup>

A Time of Thanksgiving and Prayer

Joys & Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer

**\*Hymn of Preparation**      UMH #395

*Take Time to Be Holy*

**Scripture:**      *Isaiah 61:1-4,8-11; John 1:6-8, 19-28*

**Message**      Joy in the Preparation

**Offertory**

**Doxology**      UMH #95

**Offertory Prayer<sup>1</sup>**

**\*Closing Hymn**      *UMH #240*

*Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*

**Benediction<sup>1</sup>**

**\*Hymn of Sending Forth**      UMH# 665  
Go Now in Peace

**Postlude**

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## Announcements

- Advent Bible Study!
  - Tuesdays, 7pm-8pm
    - Dec 19
  - Studying "An Unlikely Advent"
- EWOWS (yarn group) are done for the year!
  - Saturday, January 13, 10am-noon
- Christmas Eve Service
  - December 24th, 6pm
- Do you have an idea, or need, for a small group?  
Let us know
- Do you have anything to add?

## Birthdays/Anniversaries

- Birthday
  - none
- Anniversaries
  - none

Did we miss a special day in your life?  
Please let Denny know.