

# Joy



*Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church*  
*3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent*

**Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church  
Community Worship Service  
December 14, 2025**



*We have the closed hearing loop system.  
You may be able to turn your hearing device to the "T" setting.*

***To allow all worshippers to reflect and prepare for the service, please observe silence during the prelude.***

***3rd Sunday of Advent***

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**RINGING OF THE BELL**

**PRELUDE**

"Sheep May Safely Graze" (from Cantata 208) J. S. Bach

**CALL TO WORSHIP** *(Please respond with words in bold)*

Beloved, we gather to rejoice in God who does wondrous things, who promises that someday all manner of things shall be well.

**We rejoice in God who hears us in our distress.**

We worship with joy even now, confident that God will not stop until all creation is at peace.

**We rejoice in God who makes all things new.**

We lift up our voices in song and story, in prayer and praise, as we remember and rejoice in all that God has done and will do among us.

**We rejoice in God who makes our joy complete.**

Come! Let us worship God as we work toward the day when all of creation lives in everlasting joy.

**Rejoice, rejoice, for God is coming.**

**HYMN #211** O Come, O Come Emmanuel v. 1,2,4,6

## **LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE** *(Please be seated)*

Reader: In the midst of our waiting and longing for God to make the world right again, we cling to the truth that God has saved, God is saving, and God will save. So today, we join our voices with the prophet Isaiah, who calls us to live in the joy of the truth of God's salvation.

**All: We choose to believe that the day is coming when the people of God shall return home with singing, filled with joy and gladness, and that sorrow and sighing shall be no more.**

Reader: We light this candle of joy as a sign of the Truth that sets us free to live in joy as we wait and work for the day when all creation will flourish together.

*Light the third (pink) candle of the Advent wreath.*

### **Advent Prayer**

Let us pray together: **Holy God of Joy, we rejoice in the reality of who you are. We find our faith in the joy of your love for us. Our contentment comes and goes. Our happiness ebbs and flows. Our feelings are tied to our circumstances, our physical health, our brain chemistry. But our joy is deeply rooted in our identity as your beloved children. May we live into that joy as we walk through this holy season. Amen.**

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS**

### **Isaiah 35:1-10** *The redeemed return home*

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus <sup>2</sup> it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. <sup>3</sup> Strengthen the weak hand and make firm the feeble knees. <sup>4</sup> Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." <sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; <sup>6</sup> then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert; <sup>7</sup> the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall

become a swamp; the grass shall become reeds and rushes. <sup>8</sup> A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. <sup>9</sup> No lion shall be there nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. <sup>10</sup> And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

**Luke 1: 46b-55 #199**    *Canticle of Mary*  
(Please respond with the words in bold.)

**James 5:7-10**    *Waiting requires patience*

<sup>7</sup> Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. <sup>8</sup> You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup> Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! <sup>10</sup> As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

**Matthew 11:2-11**    *John, messenger of Jesus*  
(Please stand as you are able.)

<sup>2</sup> When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup> and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" <sup>4</sup> Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. <sup>6</sup> And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

<sup>7</sup> As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? <sup>8</sup> What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. <sup>9</sup> What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup> This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' <sup>11</sup> Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

L: This is the word of the Lord for the people of Christ.

**P: Thanks be to God.**

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

*(Let us offer our silent confessions.)*

**God, we confess that we have often placed our hope in people and things that can't fulfill our every need.**

**We have searched for peace in shallow places.**

**We have mistaken joy for temporal pleasure and artificial exhilaration. We have put limits on the ways we love, excluding those who need our loving kindness the most.**

**God, when we have lost our way, show us yours.**

**Guide us to the hope in you that will renew our strength.**

**Lead us to your peace that transcends all understanding.**

**Fill us with a joy we can only experience in your presence.**

**Remind us that you have always loved us with an everlasting love, so that we may share that love with others. Amen.**

## **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

In this season of desolation and uncertainty, it is good to know that God's love for us is sure, that God's commitment to us is absolute, that God is guiding us as the compassionate companions that we are called to be for each other. Let us live into this gift.

**In the name of Christ, in whom our joy is made complete, we are forgiven. Glory to God! Amen.**

## **HOMILY**

**STATEMENT OF FAITH UMH 883** United Church of Canada

*(Please stand as you are able)*

## **GLORIA PATRI #70**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.**

**HYMN #196 Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus**

## OFFERTORY

"Sinfonia"

J. S. Bach

## OFFERING

<https://www.wnccumc.org/online-donations-to-churches>

## DOXOLOGY #95

*(Please stand as you are able)*

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow.**

**Praise Him, all creatures here below.**

**Praise Him above, ye heavenly host.**

**Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

**Amen.**

## PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Gracious God of deep joy, even when storms rage and doubts rise, you call us to see with kingdom eyes—to look for healing, hope, and signs of your grace breaking in. In this Advent season of expectation and weariness, we bring these gifts as expressions of joy, rooted not in ease but in trust. May our giving bear witness to your good news: that the blind still see, the lame still walk, and the poor still receive care. Use these offerings and us as signs of your coming reign, lights in the storm, and carriers of joy. In the name of Jesus, our hope and our Redeemer. Amen.

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER

**CLOSING HYMN #213** Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

*(Please stand as you are able)*

## BENEDICTION

**POSTLUDE** "Allegro" Sonata in F Major for Oboe and Continuo

G. F. Handel

*(Please be seated)*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**The poinsettias on the altar** are offered by Marcus and Kim Dodson to the glory of God in loving memory of Ruth Cech who faithfully served LTUMC as organist from the early days of its reopening until her death.

**We welcome Wren Crook** who is sharing his musical gifts with us in worship today. Wren is a native of Hendersonville and studies oboe performance at Brevard College. He has played with the Hendersonville and Brevard community bands as well as the Brevard College wind ensemble. He has a passion for chamber and orchestral music and hopes to one day make a living playing with an orchestra.

**Advent Bible Study-open to all!** The final week of our Advent study is this Tuesday at 10:00am. All are welcome to jump in and join us. Please contact Kim at [mldkj@comporium.net](mailto:mldkj@comporium.net) for more information.

**Sunday Morning Bible Study** is taking December off as holiday and family events get into full swing. We will return on January 11<sup>th</sup>. All are invited to join as the new year begins.

**Christmas Eve Services** will be held at **5:00pm** this year.  
Invite family and friends. Casual dress.  
We look forward to sharing this holy celebration with you

### **Year-End Gifts**

If you are planning on mailing a year-end gift, please be sure to use our mailing address: **Lake Toxaway UMC, P.O. Box 83, Lake Toxaway, NC 28747**. Please let the church know if your winter address has changed by sending an email to [pastor@laketoxawayumc.org](mailto:pastor@laketoxawayumc.org) to ensure your 2025 giving statement gets to you for your taxes. Giving statements will be mailed in the early part of 2026.

**The Prayer Ministry** meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at 9:30 AM. Prayer requests may be mailed to [LTUMCPrayerRequests@gmail.com](mailto:LTUMCPrayerRequests@gmail.com). We will not be meeting on December 25<sup>th</sup> but welcome your prayer concerns.

**AA Meets Every Thursday Night** at 4:45 PM in the Dice Hall. To honor anonymity, please do not go to the Parish building from 4:00-6:00 PM. They will NOT be meeting on Christmas Day.

### **Invitation to Become a Scripture Reader for Worship in 2026**

We are inviting anyone interested to become a scripture reader for worship in the new year. Contact Kim at [mldkj@comporium.net](mailto:mldkj@comporium.net) or text 828-553-0283 to express your interest. She will work with Marcus to plan a schedule that works for you. Thank you for sharing your gifts in this way.

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### **PRAYER CONCERNS OF THE COMMUNITY**

Katie Monkus, daughter of Stan & Bobbie Moore, as she begins radiation treatment for inoperable tumors on her liver; Charlotte Gilmore;  
Those missing loved ones during this season

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### **STAFF & LAY VOLUNTEERS**

Pastor: Marcus Dodson: 828-553-0282, [marcus61dodson@gmail.com](mailto:marcus61dodson@gmail.com)

Organist: Bob Kintner: 828-329-2457

Lay Leaders: Paula Markert: 828-553-9434, Maria Buehler: 828-553-2128

Audio/Visual & Livestream: Joe Haraschak: 813-918-1916

Liturgist: Mandy Stahl

Advent Candle: Jim & Jo Ditzel

Coffee Hour\*: Nancy and Don Henderson

\*Volunteers are needed in 2026—see chart in FH

*Liturgical selections adapted from umcdiscipleship.org resources.*