

Advent 4 – December 21, 2025 – 10:30A

Order of Worship

The Community Gathers

Lighting of Altar Candles

Prelude – Instrumental

A Word of Greeting/Centering Words

Minister 'Ainise Isama'u

When we were children, we fell asleep
with walkie talkies tucked under our pillows.
All that separated us was a bathroom,
a hallway, a few feet of empty space,
but as children, even small distances can feel like miles.
So after the parents whispered prayers over our skinned knees
and spelling tests, after they kissed our sweaty foreheads
and tucked us into bed,
we'd pull the walkie talkies out from under our pillows.
We'd roll the dial on the top of the transceiver.
We'd sputter that invisible tether to life.
And with a few crackles in the quiet of the night,
you'd whisper my name.
I'd press down the button.
I'd promise I was close.
As an adult, I don't know what ever happened
to those blue-grey walkie talkies.
But I know,
that even today,
if the monsters in the closet feel too real,
and you whisper my name,
I promise I'll be close.

Opening Hymn – O Come, All Ye Faithful, UMH#234, v.1,3,6

Giving God Glory As We Come to Worship

Call to Worship (L: Leader, **P: People**)

Ireland Bone

L: Here in worship—

P: we pray together,

L: we stand together,

P: we sing together,

L: we listen together.

P: Here in worship—we are not alone.

L: So when life gives you reason to grieve, to fear, or to worry,
remember this moment.

P: We are not alone.

L: Let us worship our with-us God.

Holy and with-us God, In this place of gathered hearts, we pause to remember Your promise: *Do not fear, for I am with you.* As we pray, stand, sing, and listen together, draw us into the deep assurance of Your presence. When our lives feel uncertain—when grief whispers, when worry tightens, when fear rises— remind us of Emmanuel, the One who comes close, the One who steadies trembling hands, the One who speaks courage into our souls. In this moment of worship, anchor us in Your love. Make us attentive to Your Spirit, open to Your Word, and strengthened by the fellowship we share. For we are not alone—You are here, and we belong to You. Amen.

A Message to the Children (In Us All)

Minister 'Ainise Isama'u

Advent Wreath Lighting –

Bone Family, Susan Slade, Pam Fink

(To divide in however many parts you want)

READER 1: In a world full of fear, where do you see the presence of love?

READER 2: I see love all around us. I see love when people hold open the door.

READER 3: I see love in a warm embrace, a homemade casserole, a phone call after a long day.

READER 4: I see love in random acts of kindness and intentional acts of empathy.

READER 2 (or 5): I see love all around us.

READER 1: You are right. Even in a fearful world, love is all around us.

READER 3 (or 6): Today we light the candle of love as a reminder of this good news.

READER 2: May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a fearful world, love is here.

READER 4: Love is world-changing. Love is shining bright. We only have to look for it.

Light candle.

ALL: Thanks be to God for a love like that! Amen.

The Word of God for the People of God

Congregational Hymn – Good Christian Friends, Rejoice UMH#224, v.1,2,3

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 1:18-25, Isaiah 41:5-10

Ireland Bone

Matthew 1:18-25

18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. When Mary his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. 19 Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn't want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly. 20 As he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." 22 Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled:

23 *Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son,*

And they will call him, Emmanuel.[a] (Emmanuel means "God with us.")

24 When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife. 25 But he didn't have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. Joseph called him Jesus.

Isaiah 41:5-10

5 The coastlands see and fear; the ends of the earth tremble; they draw near and arrive.

6 Each helps the other, each saying to the other, "Take courage!"

7 The craftsman encourages the metalworker, the one who smoothes with the hammer, encourages the one who strikes the anvil, saying of the welding, "That's good, and strengthening it with nails so it won't move.

8 But you, Israel my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, offspring of Abraham, whom I love, 9 you whom I took from the ends of the earth and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I chose you and didn't reject you":

10 Don't fear, because I am with you; don't be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will surely help you; I will hold you with my righteous strong hand.

L: The word of God for all People.

P: Thanks be to God.

Special Music – Joyful, Joyful

Instrumental Ensemble

Sermon – When You're Afraid, Give Me Your Hand

Rev. Allison Mark

Pastoral Prayer – Lord's Prayer

Rev. Allison Mark

We Respond to God's Grace

****Profession of Faith & New Member Reception: Shannon Leon, Stephanie Matsunaga, Risa Vargas**

CHAD- the liturgy are on pages 5-10; can you make slides for the highlighted texts

BAPTISMAL FONT

Offering our Gifts –

Minister 'Ainise Isama'u

Offertory – Jesus, What a Wonderful Child

Faith Choirs

Doxology – Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow UMH#95

Prayer of Dedication –

Ireland Bone

Emmanuel, God-with-us, we offer these gifts—our time, our resources, our lives—as a sign of our trust in Your steady presence. Just as You came near to Joseph and Mary, and just as You spoke courage to Your people through the prophet Isaiah, come near to us now. Take what we bring, whether strong or small, and use it to shine light where there is fear, comfort where there is grief, and hope where there is worry. Dedicate our hearts to Your work, our hands to Your service, and our lives to Your love made real in this world. We are not alone, and so we give with gratitude, trusting that You are with us now and always. Amen.

Going Forth in God's Holy Name

Faith in Action – The Ministry of Faith UMC

Minister 'Ainise Isama'u

Closing Hymn – Joy to the World UMH#246, v.1,2,4

Commission and Blessings –

Rev. Allison Mark

Passing of the Peace – Postlude

****Baptismal Covenant 1**

HOLY BAPTISM
CONFIRMATION

REAFFIRMATION OF FAITH

RECEPTION INTO THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

RECEPTION INTO A LOCAL CONGREGATION

To make it easier to determine which parts of the service to use on any given occasion, this service is divided into the following sections:

- 1) Introduction to Baptism
- 2) Introduction to Confirmation and Reaffirmation
- 3) Presentation of Candidates
- 4) Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith
- 5) Parents' and Sponsors' Vow to Nurture the Child
- 6) Vows by Candidates Able to Speak for Themselves
- 7) Vows by Sponsors of Candidates
- 8) Congregation's Vows
- 9) The Apostles' Creed
- ~~10) Thanksgiving over the Water~~
- ~~11) Baptism with Laying on of Hands~~
- 12) Confirmation or Reaffirmation of Faith
- 13) Congregational Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant
- 14) Reception into The United Methodist Church
- 15) Reception into the Local Congregation
- 16) Commendation and Welcome

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERVICE

As persons come forward, an appropriate baptismal or confirmation hymn may be sung.

1 A deacon or pastor addresses the congregation:

Brothers and sisters in Christ:

Through the Sacrament of Baptism

we are initiated into Christ's holy Church.

We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation

and given new birth through water and the Spirit.

All this is God's gift, offered to us without price.

2 If there are confirmations or reaffirmations, the pastor continues:

Through confirmation,

and through the reaffirmation of our faith,

we renew the covenant declared at our baptism,

acknowledge what God is doing for us, and affirm our commitment to Christ's holy Church.

PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES

3 A representative of the congregation presents the candidates with the appropriate statements:

I present *Name(s)* for baptism.

I present *Name(s)* for confirmation.

I present *Name(s)* to reaffirm their faith.

I present *Name(s)*: STEPHANIE MATSUNAGA who come(s) seeking baptized membership from the WEST LA UNITED METHODIST Church.

I present *Name(s)*: SHANNON LEON AND RISA VARGAS who come(s) seeking professing membership from the CENTENARY UMC (Shannon) and EDMONDS UMC.

RENUNCIATION OF SIN AND PROFESSION OF FAITH

4 Since the earliest times, the vows of Christian baptism have consisted first of the renunciation of all that is evil and then the profession of faith and loyalty to Christ. Parents or other sponsors reaffirm these vows for themselves while taking the responsibilities of sponsorship. Candidates for confirmation profess for themselves the solemn vows that were made at their baptism. The pastor addresses parents or other sponsors and those candidates who can answer for themselves:

On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you:

Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness,
reject the evil powers of this world,
and repent of your sin?

I do.

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you
to resist evil, injustice, and oppression
in whatever forms they present themselves?

I do.

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior,
put your whole trust in his grace,
and promise to serve him as your Lord,
in union with the Church which Christ has opened
to people of all ages, nations, and races?

I do.

5 The pastor addresses parents or other sponsors of candidates not able to answer for themselves:

Will you nurture these children (persons)
in Christ's holy Church,
that by your teaching and example they may be guided
to accept God's grace for themselves,
to profess their faith openly,
and to lead a Christian life?

I will.

6 The pastor addresses candidates who can answer for themselves:

According to the grace given to you,
will you remain faithful members of Christ's holy Church
and serve as Christ's representatives in the world?

I will.

7 The pastor addresses the sponsors:

Will you who sponsor these candidates
support and encourage them in their Christian life?

I will.

8 The pastor addresses the congregation, and the congregation responds:

Do you, as Christ's body, the Church,
reaffirm both your rejection of sin
and your commitment to Christ?

We do.

Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life
and include these persons now before you in your care?

**With God's help we will proclaim the good news
and live according to the example of Christ.**

**We will surround these persons
with a community of love and forgiveness,
that they may grow in their trust of God,
and be found faithful in their service to others.**

**We will pray for them,
that they may be true disciples
who walk in the way that leads to life.**

9 The Apostles' Creed in threefold question-and-answer form appeared at least as early as the third century as a statement of faith used in baptisms and has been widely used in baptisms ever since. The candidate(s), sponsor(s), and local congregation join with the universal Church across the ages in this historic affirmation of the Christian faith.

A deacon or pastor addresses all, and the congregation joins the candidates and their parents and sponsors in responding:

Let us join together in professing the Christian faith
as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
[who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.]**

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

[the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.]

CONFIRMATION OR REAFFIRMATION OF FAITH

12 Acts of confirmation or reaffirmation of faith are not acts of rebaptism. >Here water may be used by the candidates as the pastor says:

Remember your baptism and be thankful. **Amen.**

In services of the baptismal covenant, water should be used generously as a sign of the abundance of God's grace, cleansing, life-giving and life-renewing power. Appropriate ways persons being confirmed or reaffirming their faith may use the water include the following:

a) They may touch the water and make the sign of the cross on their own foreheads.

b) They may scoop up the water and let it fall back into the font.

c) They may use it on their heads, or hands, or to refresh their faces.

As the pastor, and others if desired, place hands on the head of each person being confirmed or reaffirming faith, the pastor says to each:

*Name, the Holy Spirit work within you,
that having been born through water and the Spirit,
you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. **Amen.***

13 Acts of reaffirmation are not acts of rebaptism. When there is a congregational reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant, the congregation may be invited to use or receive the water as or after the pastor says:

Remember your baptism and be thankful. **Amen.**

Appropriate ways persons may use the water include:

a) Touching the water and making the sign of the cross on their own foreheads;

b) Scooping up the water and letting it fall back into the font;

c) Scooping it over their heads, or hands, or to refresh their faces. <

d) Or, a deacon, the pastor, or other assistants may use an asperges, evergreen branch or other means to sprinkle small amounts of water toward the congregation. This parallels sprinkling with hyssop for purification (Exodus 12:22 ; Psalm 51:7) and sprinkling as a sign of renewal (Ezekiel 36:25 –26).

RECEPTION INTO THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

14 *If there are persons coming into baptized or professing membership in The United Methodist Church from other denominations who have not yet been presented, they may be presented at this time.*

The pastor addresses all those transferring their baptized or professing membership into The United Methodist Church, together with those who, through baptism or confirmation, have just professed their own faith:

*As members of Christ's universal Church,
will you be loyal to Christ through The United Methodist Church,
and do all in your power to strengthen its ministries?
I will.*

RECEPTION INTO THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

15 *If there are persons joining this congregation as baptized or professing members from other United Methodist congregations who have not yet been presented, they may be presented at this time.*

The pastor addresses all those transferring baptized or professing membership into the congregation, together with those who, through baptism or confirmation, have just professed their own faith:

As members of this congregation,
will you faithfully participate in its ministries
by your prayers, your presence,
your gifts, your service
and your witness?
I will.

COMMENDATION AND WELCOME

16 *The pastor addresses the congregation:*

Members of the household of God,
I commend these persons to your love and care.
Do all in your power to increase their faith,
confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

The congregation responds:

We give thanks for all that God has already given you
and we welcome you in Christian love.
As members together with you
in the body of Christ
and in this congregation
of The United Methodist Church,
we renew our covenant
faithfully to participate
in the ministries of the Church
by our prayers, our presence,
our gifts, our service, and our witness,
that in everything God may be glorified
through Jesus Christ.

The pastor addresses those baptized, confirmed, or received, using an appropriate gesture of blessing:

The God of all grace,
who has called us to eternal glory in Christ,
establish you and strengthen you
that you may live in grace and peace.

One or more laypersons, including children, may join the pastor in acts of welcome and peace. Baptized children may be welcomed by a kiss of peace or other acts or words immediately following Baptism with Laying on of Hands.

An appropriate hymn, stanza, or response may be sung.

The service continues with prayers including appropriate thanksgivings and intercessions for those who have participated in these acts.

Services of the baptismal covenant most appropriately lead into the celebration of Holy Communion, in which the union of the new members with the body of Christ is most fully expressed. The new members, including children, may bring the bread and wine to the Lord's table, receive first, and assist in serving.