

**BENEDICTION**

Be patient, beloved ones, and let your hearts be strong, for the coming of the Lord is near.

**POSTLUDE**

**“GLAD TIDINGS”**

**DANA MOODY**

*Today’s service is being broadcast on Facebook Live at 11 am. You can access the service through the Oaklette Church Group on Facebook. You can also access the sermon through the Oaklette UMC Facebook page. If you are unable to use Facebook Live, a link can be sent to you by email after the Facebook Live Worship has been recorded, but we will need your email address to do this. The Facebook Live service will also be uploaded to our website.*

*The Food Basket on the altar is presented to the glory of God.*

*The flowers on the altar are presented to the glory of God by Barbara Bennett in honor of Todd Bennett on his birthday, Dec. 25.*

**PARTNERS IN MINISTRY TODAY**

**Members of the Church**

**Nursery Care Providers: Lisa & Brooks Ryno**

**Prayer Partner: Brenda Swoope**

**Lay Reader: Lisa Bailey**

**Audio-Visual Operator: Ericka Litten**

**Greeter: Jo Ann Rooks**

**Pastor: Rev. Ned Alderman**

**Administrative Assistant: Eileen Ballance**

**Financial Secretary: Edna Bess**

**Coastal Virginia Dist. Superintendent: Rev. Beth Givens**

**Resident Bishop, Richmond Area: Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson**

**CCLI License #1625684**

**Donations have been made to Oaklette UMC in lieu of cards:**

Debbie and David Rippard

Jo Ann Rooks

Linda and John Tandy

Rev. Ned Alderman

Judy Litten

***Oaklette United Methodist Church***

***"God's Body in this Community"***

*“Oaklette United Methodist Church through worship, education, and outreach, seeks to make the gospel of Jesus Christ real, as we minister to all people.”*

***December 21, 2025***

***Fourth Sunday of Advent***



*Welcome in the name of our Lord. A nurturing and well-supervised nursery is available for infants and young children. A cry room is also available. Please ask the greeter for further assistance and directions to these rooms.*

**GREETING**

**JOYS AND CONCERNS**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER**

Loving, sustaining God, like the mighty oak, may our branches at Oaklette church embrace those around us in this community. Use us as an instrument to welcome and shelter your people. Deepen our roots so that our branches are strong. Let the Holy Spirit flow like a river through our church, so that we may do your will. In Jesus’ holy name, Amen.

**OLD TESTAMENT READING**

**Malachi 2:17-3:3, 5-6; CEB**

You have made the Lord tired with your words.

You say, “How have we made him tired?” When you say: “Anyone doing evil is good in the Lord’s eyes,” or “He delights in those doing evil,” or “Where is the God of justice?”

Look, I am sending my messenger who will clear the path before me; suddenly the Lord whom you are seeking will come to his temple.

The messenger of the covenant in whom you take delight is coming, says the Lord of heavenly forces. Who can endure the day of his coming? Who can withstand his appearance? He is like the refiner’s fire or the cleaner’s soap.

I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against the sorcerers, the adulterers, those swearing falsely, against those who cheat the day laborers out of their wages as well as oppress the widow and the orphan, and against those who brush aside the foreigner and do not revere me, says the Lord of heavenly forces. I am the Lord, and I do not change; and you, children of Jacob, have not perished.

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

ROB & SHELENE CASTELLOW

Soon, we’ll come face to face with the scandal of Advent: Mary, the unmarried mother; God Incarnate growing in Mary’s womb as a vulnerable baby; Joseph contemplating leaving Mary because of her pregnancy; God’s love at work in ways that society and propriety could not understand; God calling Mary and Joseph to faithfulness despite the fear of disgrace.

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

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

PRELUDE

“MARY, DID YOU KNOW”

DANA MOODY

PASSING OF THE PEACE

MESSAGE FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

We hear the echo of a promise: “I’m coming!”

**Are you really the One?**

“The blind receive their sight and the lame walk.”

**Are you really the One?**

“The lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear.”

**Are you really the One?**

“The dead are raised and the poor eat their fill.”

**But are you really the One?**

“I’m the one who changes the world. Are you ready for me?”

**With God’s help, we’re ready to follow you. We’re ready for you!**

**OPENING PRAYER**

**As the days darken and the winter winds blow, come to us, Promised One, in our time of waiting. Keep the vision of your salvation before our eyes, where the blind receive their sight, the lame are made to walk, and the lowly are lifted up. Shine the light of your healing love into the darkness of our land, that all may see your glory and know that salvation is at hand. Live in and through us during this Advent season, that we might be messengers of your grace and instruments of your peace. Amen.**

HYMN

“PEOPLE LOOK EAST”

#202

People, look east. The time is near, of the crowning of the year.  
Make your house fair as you are able, trim the hearth and set the table.  
People, look east and sing today: Love, the guest, is on the way.

**INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**

All that we have is the Lord’s. All that we may become and receive is in God’s hands. For the sake of the joy that is ours when our bonds grow deep with others, let us live generously for the well-being of the world.

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING/DEDICATION**

Faithful God of unfolding plans, when our certainty falters and our expectations collapse, you are still at work, inviting us into grace that redefines and redeems. Like John, we bring our gifts and lay down our plans, trusting that your Spirit can shape our offering into something greater than we imagined. Let these gifts and our lives be signs of obedience, humility, and hope. May they help carry Christ into a world still longing for peace, hungry for love, and needing redemption. We pray in the name of the one who is Emmanuel – God with us. Amen.

**DOXOLOGY**

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.

HYMN

“THERE’S A SONG IN THE AIR”

#249

There's a song in the air! There's a star in the sky!  
There's a mother's deep prayer, and a baby's low cry!  
And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,  
for the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

There's a tumult joy, o'er the wonderful birth,  
for the virgin's sweet boy is the Lord of the earth.  
Ay! the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,  
for the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

In the light of that star, lie the ages impearled;  
and that song from afar has swept over the world.  
Every hearth is aflame and the beautiful sing  
in the homes of the nations that Jesus is King!

We rejoice in the light, and we echo the song  
that comes down through the night from the heavenly throng.  
Ay! we shout to the lovely evangel they bring they bring,  
and we greet in his cradle our Savior and King!

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is planted there.  
Give up your strength the seed to nourish, that in course the flower may flourish.  
People, look east and sing today: Love, the rose, is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim, one more light the bowl shall brim,  
shining beyond the frosty weather, bright as sun and moon together.  
People, look east and sing today: Love, the Star, is on the way.

Angels announce with shouts of mirth, him who brings new life to earth.  
Set ev'ry peak and valley humming with the word, the Lord is coming.  
People, look east and sing today: Love, the Lord, is on the way.

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We gather together in this season of Advent anticipating hope, praying for peace, attempting to cultivate joy and share love amidst commotion, grief, despair and uncertainty.

*[Moment of silence]*

**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.**

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 definite – that God is guiding us as the compassionate companions that we are called to be for each other. Let us live into this gift.

**Amen.**

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

**ANTHEM**

**“BORN IS EMMANUEL”**

**CHOIR**

### GOSPEL READING

**Matthew 11:2-11, CEB**

Now when John heard in prison about the things the Christ was doing, he sent word by his disciples to Jesus, asking, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” Jesus responded, “Go, report to John what you hear and see. Those who were blind are able to see. Those who were crippled are walking. People with skin diseases are cleansed. Those

who were deaf now hear. Those who were dead are raised up. The poor have good news proclaimed to them. Happy are those who don't stumble and fall because of me.” When John's disciples had gone, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John: “What did you go out to the wilderness to see? A stalk blowing in the wind? What did you go out to see? A man dressed up in refined clothes? Look, those who wear refined clothes are in royal palaces. What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. He is the one of whom it is written: Look, I'm sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you. “I assure you that no one who has ever been born is greater than John the Baptist. Yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

**LESSON**

**“NO OFFENSE”**

**Rev. Ned Alderman**

### RESPONSE TO THE WORD      PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Pastor: In every generation, O God, you bring forth your new creation and manifest your presence with us; grant us a vision of your dream for the world, that we may welcome the coming of your Christ in our time, as we pray: Show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Lay reader: Gracious God, send your blessing upon our church, set apart for the gospel and called to belong to Jesus Christ, that we who have received grace and apostleship may mediate the reconciliation of your divine presence in all the world. Show the light of your countenance;

**and we shall be saved.**

Lay reader: Grant a sign unto our nation and to all in authority, that we may not weary you, O God, but rather may refuse the evil and choose the good. Show the light of your countenance;

**and we shall be saved.**

Lay reader: Purify our conscience by your daily visitation, O Christ, that those who have been fed with the bread of tears may be restored to joy and brought to newness of life throughout the earth. Show the light of your countenance;

**and we shall be saved.**

Lay reader: God be with us in this community and conceive in us your Holy Spirit. Show the light of your countenance;

**and we shall be saved.**

Lay reader: Restore us, O Lord God of hosts, and let your gentle spirit descend upon those for whom we offer our prayers. Hear our gratefulness for the blessings you bestow upon us. Let your angels bring those who have died into the fullness of your presence. Show the light of your countenance;

**and we shall be saved.**

Pastor: Blessed Emmanuel, God with us, let your Spirit dwell among us and be born anew in the life of your people, that we may filled with the fullness of Christ, to the honor and glory of your holy name. Amen.