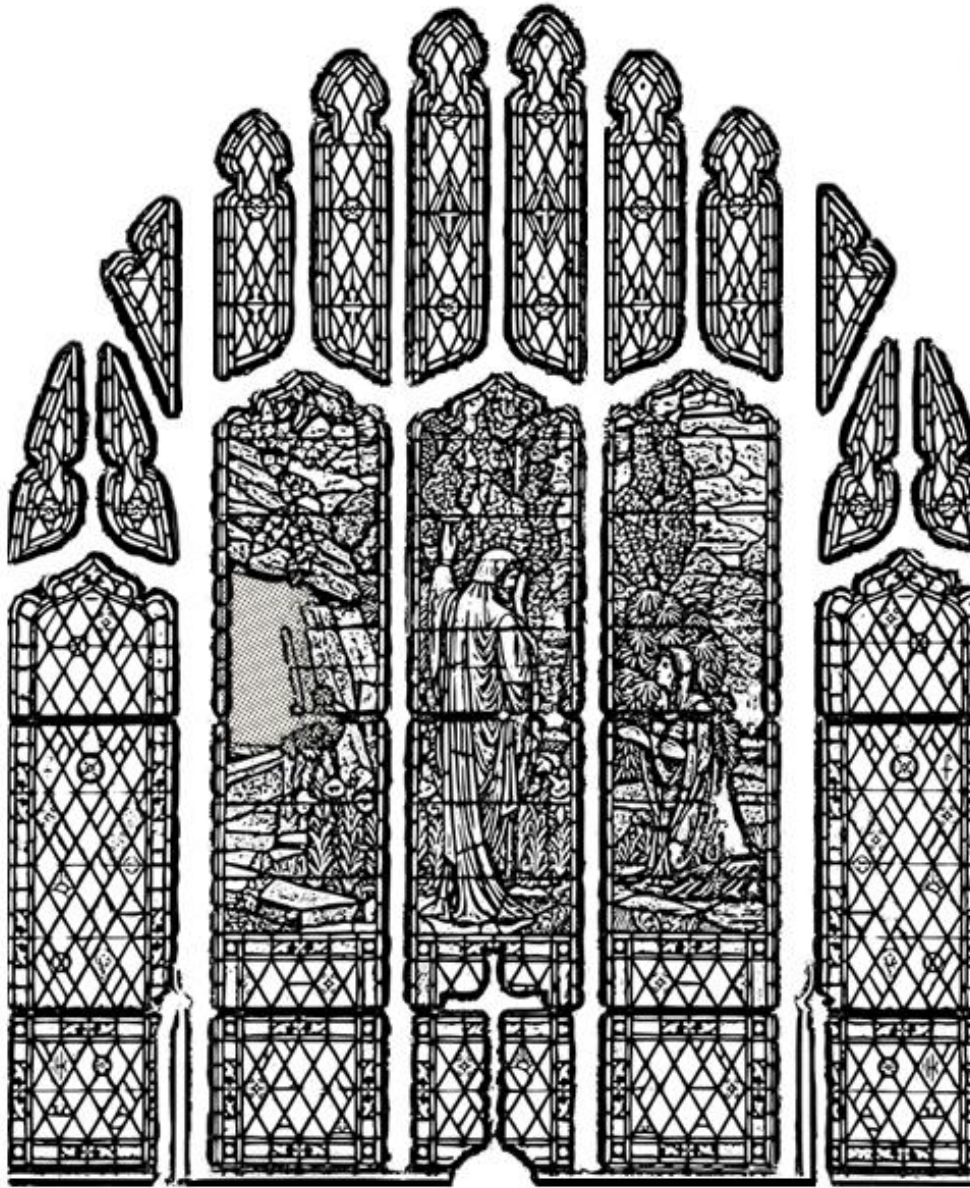


MT. LEBANON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Sunday, December 14, 2025, 8:30AM & 10:45AM

The Third Sunday of Advent

3319 WEST LIBERTY AVENUE ... PITTSBURGH, PA 15216 ... 412-531-7131

THE REV'D THOMAS Q. STRANDBURG, PASTOR ... tstrandburg@mlumc.org



Sunday, December 14, 2025 – Advent III

Imagine if word got around that because of our church's ministry, the "blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them." Would our church be thriving and busy beyond belief? What standards of measurement are we using when we evaluate whether we are "for real"?

**Indicates an invitation to stand in spirit or posture, as able.*

The Prelude

"II. Introit: Veni Emmanuel"
from Advent: First Religious Suite for Organ

Pietro Yon (1886-1943)

As the prelude begins, all are humbly asked to conclude any conversation and make use of this moment of quietude to prepare your hearts and minds for the worship of Almighty God.

The Introit (10:45)

Introit for the Third Sunday in Advent

Healey Willan

ANTIPHON: *Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again, I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

PSALM VERSE: *Lord, thou hast been favorable unto thy land: Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. Glory be...*

All rise, in body or spirit, at the sound of the chimes.

*Opening Hymn

"Savior of the nations, come"

UMH 214

* The Greeting & Call to Worship

✠ The Lord be with you.

✠ **And also with you.**

✠ 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 the truth of the day that all the earth awaits.**

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

✠ **We rejoice in the truth of the day that all the earth awaits.**

✠ 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 the truth of the day that all the earth awaits.**

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

✠ **Come! Let us rejoice in the truth of the day that all the earth awaits.**

***Opening Prayer**

Said by all, with one voice.

Holy God of Joy,

We rejoice in the reality of who you are.

We live within the joy of your love for us.

Our contentment comes and goes. Our happiness ebbs and flows.

Our feelings depend upon our circumstances,

our physical health, our brain chemistry.

But our joy is deeply rooted in our identity as your beloved children.

And we give you thanks. Amen.

***Silent Prayer**

***Response**

"Prepare the way of the Lord"

UMH 207

(sung one in unison, then several times in canon)

Advent Wreath Candle Lighting Liturgy

First Reader: In the midst of our waiting and longing for God to restore creation, we cling to the knowledge that God has saved, that God is saving, and that God will save. In this faith, we join our voices with the prophet Isaiah, who calls us to live joyfully in the truth of God's salvation.

Congregation: We choose to believe that the day is coming when "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." (Is. 35:10)

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

As the first, second, and third candle are lit, all sing:

"All earth is waiting" (v.3)

UMH 210

A Message for Young Disciples (10:45 am)

As the young disciples gather at the front of the church, all sing:

This, this is where children belong, welcomed as part of the worshipping throng.

Water, God's word, bread and cup, prayer and song: This is where children belong.

The young disciples (school-age children) then depart the sanctuary for Kids Praise. Teachers will lead them back to the sanctuary prior to the conclusion of the service. Nursery is available for younger children; please see an usher for directions.

The First Lesson

A Reading from the book of Prophet Isaiah

Is. 35:1-10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus 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.

Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. 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."

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; 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; 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.

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. 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. 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.

Lector: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People: Thanks be to God.

***Hymn**

"Hail to the Lord's annointed"

UMH 203

***The Second Lesson**

A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

MT. 11:2-11

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 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. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

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? What, then, did you go out

to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 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.’
“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.”

Lector: This is the word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

The Pastoral Prayer & The Lord's Prayer

Said by all, with one voice.

**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, the power, and the glory forever.
Amen.**

The Sermon

“Are We for Real?”

Rev. Strandburg

***The Affirmation of Faith**

UMH 882

All are invited to stand, in spirit or in posture, and to face the altar as the affirmation of faith is recited.

Pastor: Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is the one true church, apostolic and universal, whose holy faith let us now declare:

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

**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.
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. Amen.

***The Sign of Peace**

℣. The peace of Christ be with you.
℟. And also with you.

*The people are now invited to share signs of peace with their fellow members of Christ's body.
Extended conversation would ideally and most appropriately be reserved until the end of the service.*

Announcements

At the Offertory

The Offertory Hymn (8:30 am)	"A charge to keep I have"	UMH 413
The Anthem (10:45 am)	O Come Emmanuel	Thomas W. Jefferson (b.1963)

***The Doxology & Prayer of Dedication** **UMH 94**

***The Sending Hymn** "O come, O come Emmanuel" **UMH 211**

***The Dismissal**

℣. Let us bless the Lord.
℟. Thanks be to God.

***The Benediction & Recessional**

The people remain in place until the altar party has retired.

The Postlude	<i>Toccata on Veni Emmanuel</i>	Adolphus Hailstork (b.1941)
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Prayer Concerns

Dennis Kelly, *cousin to Derick Florian, recovering from heart surgery and other health concerns.*

Mary Garber's Meals-on-Wheels driver, undergoing heart surgery.

*The family and loved ones of **Leonard DeLuca**, father of Kevin DeLuca, who passed away earlier this month.*

Gary Henry, *undergoing cancer treatment.*

Clark Remington, *struggling with illness.*

The Rev'd **Deborah Ackley-Killian**, *undergoing cancer treatment.*

Norma Buhrman, *enduring serious illness.*

For those serving their country or community as first responders or in the armed forces, especially:

SPC **Russell Dale** - CPT **Shaun Hay** - LTC **Azizi Wesmiller** - LTC **Matthew Wesmiller**

2LT **Keith Cable** - LTC **Zachary Allen Finch** - CPL **Wyatt Hoover**

*This week, we remember and pray for Christ's body throughout the world, especially remembering this week the church in **Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam**. (Prayer Cycle of the World Council of Churches).*

Please remember the special concerns of those in our community and throughout our world in your personal prayer life throughout the week. If you wish to solicit prayers from the congregation for any matter (health, travel, special concerns, etc.), please contact the church office to have your concern added to the prayer list.

Leaders in Worship this Morning

SAMANTHA BAKER AND OLIVIA SCHMIDT, ACOLYTES

MATT BAKER, CROSS BEARER

KIM RHOTON (8:30AM) AND STACEY ROSLECK (10:45AM), LECTORS

THE CHOIR OF THE MT. LEBANON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

MR. A. MITCHELL V. STECKER, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC & LITURGY

THE REV'D THOMAS Q. STRANDBURG, SENIOR PASTOR

The altar flowers this morning given by
Bob & Beverly Festor
in loving memory of
Joey,
their son, who died on this day a year ago,
and who is loved and missed by his parents.

The flowers in the narthex given by
Cyndy Smith Finniss
in honor of the occasion of the 83rd wedding anniversary of her parents (Dec. 18),
Ginnie and Bill Smith
and in celebration of the 8th wedding anniversary of her daughter and son-in-law (Dec. 16),
Andrea Megan Finniss and Jordan Wade Moran.

The rose on the altar given in celebration of the birth of
Dylan Kirk Moran
on September 22, 2025,
son of Andrea Finniss and Jordan Moran, brother to Ethan.

*For information about furnishing altar flowers for future services,
contact Lizzie Diller at 412-860-3614. The cost is \$45 per arrangement.*