

Knox Presbyterian Church
Rev. Emma Duncan
December 21, 2025



Advent Four - Candle of Love
Christmas Play

Prelude

Peter playing

Welcome

Call to worship (PWS&D Advent Liturgy)

Jackie Lawrence and Susan Malcolm

Leader: An angel of the Lord declared, “God is with us” — this is the greatest gift of love.

People: Yet even at Christmas, love is often measured by gifts and material things.

Leader: But God’s love can come through people: a king named David, a prophet named Nathan, and Mary and Joseph. In a baby, God’s love was made real among us.

People: Can we believe that God’s love is revealed through people? On this fourth Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of love, a light for our world.

The candle of love is lit.

Let us pray together: Living God, thank you for your deep and abiding love. May we see ourselves and others through your eyes, as we follow your way of love. Come, Lord Jesus.

Music: O little town of Bethlehem (#164, verses 1, 2, 4)

Peter playing

Prayers of Adoration and Confession (including The Lord’s Prayer)

O come, O come, Emmanuel. As we journey ever closer towards Christ’s humble birth, we are in awe of all that you have done for us. Lord, we come to you this morning, already tired. We are tired from rushing around and trying to meet the demands and expectations of this season. Slow us down Lord. Restore our childlike wonder and belief that miracles really do happen. Let us hear this familiar story with attentive ears. Let us witness the miracle of Christmas with fresh eyes. Let the Christ child dwell in our hearts and minds.

As we wait in expectation of Christ’s birth, we know Lord that we need your forgiveness, mercy, and grace in our lives. We make choices every day that are the wrong choices. We choose paths that lead to temptation. We choose to speak when we should listen.

We choose silence when we should speak out. We choose ourselves when we should choose others.

Have mercy on us, O Lord, according to your righteousness. Forgive our many sins.

Thank you, precious Lord, for your saving grace. Restore to us the joy of your salvation. Let your Spirit rest upon us. Give us wisdom and understanding – as individuals and as a community of faith – that we may share the Christmas story in hope and joy.

We pray in the holy name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying...

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, for ever and ever. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

On the fourth Sunday of Advent, we are reminded of what Jesus said in the Gospel of John - for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son and whosoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17)

Beloved in the Lord - we are forgiven through the saving grace of Jesus Christ. This is the best Christmas gift that we will ever receive! Amen.

Announcements

1. Welcome! Join us for fellowship down in our hall. There are special treats today in celebration of Jesus' birthday. 😊
2. Thank yous...
 - a. Susan Malcolm and Jackie Lawrence for doing our readings today
 - b. Carolyn Haacke for playing the piano
 - c. All who have helped put our Christmas Play together
3. Thank you to everyone who contributed to our White Gifts Ministry. We raised \$3,400.00!! Each organization was given \$850.00.
4. Christmas Eve service at 4 p.m. Carols and the Sacrament of Holy Communion.
5. December 28th
 - a. Rev. Emma's last worship service
 - b. All givings for 2025 need to be in by next Sunday to receive credit for the 2025 tax year
6. 2026 Offering Envelopes
7. Interim Moderator – the Rev. Dr. Vicky Eldridge

Dedication of our Tithes and Offerings

Peter playing

Song of Thanks: Hope is a star (#119, verse 4)

Love is a flame that burns in our heart.
Jesus has come and will never depart.
When God is a child there's joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
And none shall be afraid.

Prayer of Dedication (not written in advance)

Prayer for Illumination

Let us pray. God of whispers and shouts, you proclaim the good news of love from all corners of creation. As we turn to our scriptures, may the words inspire us to dream of a world where love thrives among us. Amen.

Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Isaiah and we will be reading responsively chapter 11, verses 1-6.

Leader: A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

**People: The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.**

Leader: His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

People: He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide by what his ears hear,

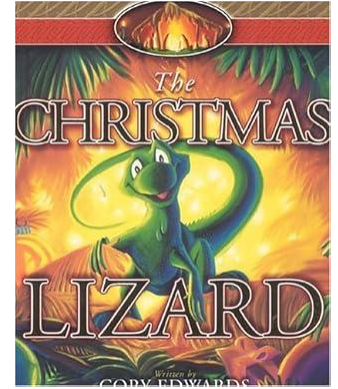
Leader: but with righteousness he shall judge for the poor
and decide with equity for the oppressed of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

**People: Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.**

Leader: The wolf shall live with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
the calf and the lion will feed together,

All: and a little child shall lead them. Amen.

Christmas Play - The Christmas Lizard¹



Music: O Christmas Tree (on screen only)

Rev. Emma:

Who has a pet?

What kind?

Have you ever had a pet escape from you? Either from their cage or from your house?

Well, I have a story about a pet that escaped – a lizard. His name is Oscar and one night he escaped from his cage.

The night that Oscar escaped was Christmas Eve. The whole house was decorated with lots of bright and shiny decorations and he was amazed at what he saw. In the living room, he saw something strange and wonderful at the same time – a tree! But not just an ordinary tree – what a glittering display!

The branches sparkled with sparkling ornaments and tiny lights. The tree stretched all the way to the ceiling. Oscar wondered if he could climb the tree.

What do you think? He had to try!

So up he went...up & up and around & around and higher & higher.

Oscar soon discovered that he was not alone...

Cast:

Oscar - William

Angel - Scarlett

Keepsake - Samara

Nutcracker - Declan

Elf – James

Reader - Madeline

¹ Edwards, Cory. *The Christmas Lizard*. England: Blue Yonder Films. 2000.

Nutcracker:

Halt! Who goes there?

I am a nutcracker, one of the guards of this tree.

Oscar:

I'm sorry. I didn't know that this was *your* tree.

Nutcracker:

Oh, it's not *my* tree. It's a Christmas tree – it's for everyone.

Oscar:

Christmas? What is that?

Nutcracker:

Why Christmas is the biggest celebration of the year. There are always lots of parties, music, and lots of good food.

Oscar:

A party? For what?

Nutcracker:

For goodwill and peace on earth.

Oscar:

So that's what Christmas is about...

Music: Jesus Christ is coming to town (on screen only)

Reader:

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”
which means, “God is with us.”

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

Music: The First Nowell #136 verses 1 & 6

Rev. Emma:

Oscar said good night to the Nutcracker and told him that he was going to continue exploring the tree.

So up Oscar went... up & up and around & around and higher & higher.
Oscar met a little man with a pointy hat.

Elf:

Merry Christmas!

Oscar:

Christmas?! Do you know about Christmas too?

Elf:

I sure do! I'm an elf – I work for the man himself.

Oscar:

The man?

Elf:

Yes – the big cheese, jolly Old St. Nick – Santa Claus!

Oscar:

I've never heard of him – is he the reason for Christmas?

Elf:

Oh yes! He's Mister Christmas! He gives toys and candies to all the kids.

Oscar:

Sooo...Christmas is a day for parties and toys?

Elf:

You got it! It's all about the toys – that's why everyone is so happy at Christmas!

Reader:

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

So, they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

Music: While shepherds watched #138 verses 1-4

Rev. Emma:

Oscar wasn't too sure about what the elf said, so he said good-bye and carried on up the tree.

So up Oscar went... up & up and around & around and higher & higher.

Next Oscar met a different kind of ornament. It looked older than the others and it was made with different materials. Oscar introduced himself to this ornament and she told him that she was a keepsake.

Keepsake:

I was made with love and care by a little boy a long time ago.

Oscar:

Wow! Can you tell me what Christmas is all about?"

Keepsake:

Christmas is about families and helping other people. Like giving food and clothes to the poor.

Oscar:

But I thought Christmas was about parties and toys?

Keepsake:

Oh no...Christmas is a time for being with family and helping others. I've been around for a long time and I've seen what joy Christmas can bring.

Reader:

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage.”

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’ ”

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”

When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Music - We Three Kings #173 verses 1 & 5

Rev. Emma:

Oscar thanked the keepsake and said good-bye.

So up Oscar went... up & up and around & around and higher & higher. He climbed to the top of the tree and there was the most beautiful ornament of all – a lovely angel.

Oscar:

Wow! You are the prettiest thing that I have ever seen! No wonder they put you on top!

Angel:

I am an angel - a messenger from God. Angels brought the Good News to everyone on the first Christmas.

Oscar:

You mean - you know the real reason for Christmas?

Angel:

Yes, I do. It's about a baby.

Oscar:

A baby?

The Nutcracker said it is about parties...

The elf said it is about toys...

The keepsake said that it is about helping people...

How can Christmas mean all those things?

Angel:

All of these things help us celebrate, but they aren't the real reason. The real reason is a baby named Jesus. God sent his son, Jesus, from heaven for us. Jesus loves us and wants us to be his children. He was born in a stable a long time ago and he is the reason for Christmas. It's his birthday.

Oscar:

So that's why we sing and eat and give presents and help each other, isn't it?!

Angel:

That's right – the best way to celebrate is by remembering Jesus and loving others.

Rev. Emma:

Oscar thanked the angel and went back to his cage.

As he settled down to sleep, he said quietly to himself – happy birthday Jesus and Merry Christmas.

Friends, today we have seen two stories unfold at the same time – a story about an escaped pet and a story about a baby, born in Bethlehem so long ago.

Each one of us longs to experience the true joy of the Christmas season – but not because of parties or toys or even helping people. We tell this old, familiar story to experience because of the coming of Jesus Christ.

Born into humble circumstances, the Christ Child would show us the way of hope, peace, joy, and love. He would grow into a man who would proclaim the coming kingdom of God. He was a man who would die for love.

This is the true joy of the Christmas season and it is a story that the world longs to know. O come, O come, Emmanuel.

And our job? Go tell it on the mountain!

Music: Go tell it on the mountain #133 all verses

Prayer (not written in advance)

Blessing

Sung Amen

Carolyn playing

Postlude

Carolyn playing