



“Hope Like a Dancer” by Lauren Wright Pittman
Cover Art - Artist Statement

John the Baptist was thrown in prison after publicly questioning the legality of Herod's marriage (Matthew 14:3-5). He was not afraid to go toe-to-toe with the powerful, and perhaps he expected Jesus' ministry to look more confrontational and politically strategic. In questioning Jesus, I wonder if John sought a particular answer to hang his hope on, that maybe the Messiah would be how he'd imagined him. Maybe Jesus would bust him out of jail and take things straight to Herod, but Jesus offers something else.

In this image, John sits in prison, letting the disciples' testimony settle in. People with hearing, visual, and physical impairments experience new senses and mobility. Those with skin diseases are cleansed. Those with little material comfort are offered irrepressible hope, and the lungs of the dead are filled with the breath of life. I decided to image this good news through the dancing light of a lantern in John's prison cell. I chose dancing figures because dancing feels like a primal response to the radical healing taking place outside the prison walls. As these six dancers illuminate the cell, I imagine John, even if for a moment, breaking into a bit of laughter at the magnitude of Jesus' ministry. Jesus was quite literally doing the unimaginable. He was removing barriers so that the marginalized were no longer reduced to begging and sitting on mats, shoved to the edges of society. He was not only healing physical ailments; perhaps more importantly, he was restoring people to community.

Out of all the miraculous actions mentioned, the news did not include “release of the captives” (Luke 4:18-19). With this message, John would know that he was not going to be freed, and so, the number of dancers would remain one short of seven.⁴ As we know all too well, God's work isn't completed in Jesus' time. We are still woefully short of realizing the fullness of God's desire for all of creation, and the work is ours to see through. Until then, let us keep our eyes peeled for the glimmers of hope dancing all around us and work toward a day when all can join in that dance of wholeness.

-Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

*With Christ as the Cornerstone, we will build a church of living stones,
where every member is a minister and is equipped to express God's love
by word and deed to all people.*

Based on 1 Peter 2:5, 6

The Worship of God

Second Sunday of Advent

December 7, 2025

Gathering Music

“In the Bulb There Is a Flower”
GBC Worship Band

PROMISE
Words and Music by Natalie Sleeth

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

CRANHAM
Words by Christina Rossetti
Music by Gustav Holst

“Happy Christmas (War Is Over)”

Words and Music by John Lennon
and Yoko Ono

“God Is Guiding”

Words and Music by
Christian McIvor ©2025

Prelude

“Breath of Heaven (Mary’s Song)”
Sandra Hunt

by Amy Grant and Chris Eaton
arr. Carol Tornquist

Welcome

Steve Rose

Call to Worship

One: Family of faith, God is at work!

All: God is healing and creating,

One: redeeming and dreaming,

All: calling and sending,

One: Listening and loving.

All: Yes, indeed, God is at work!

One: So may we worship our God who never gives up.

All: May we worship our God who holds onto hope.

Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Sandra Millican and Montana Alston

†Opening Carol #255 “Lo! How a Rose E’er Blooming”

ES IST EIN’ ROS’
Traditional German Carol
Music from *Geistliche Kirchengesäng*
harm. Michael Praetorius

Lo, how a Rose e’er blooming from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse’s lineage coming as men of old have sung.
It came, a Flow’ret bright,
Amid the cold of winter when half-spent was the night.

Isaiah ‘twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind;
With Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.
To show God’s love aright
She bore to men a Savior when half-spent was the night.

This Flow’r whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor the darkness everywhere.
True man, yet very God,
From sin and death He saves us and lightens every load.

Children’s Sermon

April Alston

†Centering Song #250 “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (Stanza 1)

ST. LOUIS
Words by Phillips Brooks
Music by Lewis H. Redner

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

Pastoral Prayer

Anna Beth Cross

† *Please rise in body or spirit.*

Offertory Anthem

"Rejoice! Emmanuel"
GBC Choir

arr. Mary McDonald

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lowly exile here, until the Son of God appear.

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Ah, shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease; and fill the world with heaven's peace. (Refrain)

Come!

†Doxology for Advent

VENI EMMANUEL
Words by Thomas Ken
15th Century French Melody

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise Christ, all people here below;
praise Holy Spirit evermore;
praise Triune God, whom we adore.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.**

†Prayer of Dedication

Michael-David Rowe

Scripture

Isaiah 43:19-21

Angela Rose

One: The Word of God, for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Peace: God Is Guiding Still

Bo Prosser

†Carol #256

“Love Has Come!”

BRING A TORCH
Words by Ken Bible
Traditional French Carol Melody arr. Tom Fettle

Love has come– a light in the darkness! Love explodes in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it; hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high.

Love is born! Come share in the wonder; love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of His mother; what is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers;
Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.

Love has come– He never will leave us! Love is life ever lasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us; love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas;
Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

Celebrating Community

Christian McIvor

†Benediction

Bo Prosser

†Sending Song

“What Do You Fear?”
(Excerpt - see insert for notated lead sheet)

Words and Music
by Christian McIvor ©2025

We spend a lifetime laboring toward all that we become
And wonder if it's made a difference when the day is done.
Though struggle lies before us– more justice to fulfill,
There's peace in quiet transformation; God is working still.

In this uncertain world, we're asked each day, “What do you fear?”
The answers move us closer to our God, who's always near.
With courage, trust, and action, we'll live into our call;
Through darkness, we'll cry, “Here I am!” to share the light with all.

Postlude

“Christmas Bells”
Pam Weis

arr. Robert Thygerson

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