

First Congregational United Church of Christ
“Where No One Is A Stranger”
Second Sunday of Advent
December 10, 2023

PRELUDE

RINGING OF THE BELL

GREETINGS, GOOD NEWS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, JESUS ENCOUNTERS

Lighting the Advent Candle of Peace

One: Each Sunday leading up to the celebration of the birth of Jesus, we reflect on a theme that centers us as we wait with eager expectation for the glory of God to be revealed. Last Sunday we centered ourselves on the theme of hope. This Sunday, we center on “Peace.” The prophet Isaiah announced God’s coming to a people exiled in a parched wilderness. He declared that God’s redemption would make a highway in the desert and make the rough places plain. God would come as a shepherd—feeding, leading, and cradling the weary flock. This Advent, we seek God, the shepherd. Let us light the candle of peace.

(candle lit)

Many: Shine on us, God of justice; Guide our path through gloom of night; Bear within us Wisdom’s glory; Come to us, O Christ the Light.

*CALL TO WORSHIP

(read responsively)

One: Listen to what the Lord our God says to us:

Many: Peace is God's hope for us; salvation is God's gift to us.

One: See what the Lord our God reveals to us:

Many: righteousness is the path to the kingdom; faithfulness is the highway we build.

One: Tell what the Lord our God asks us to speak:

Many: prepare God's way; the Christ is coming to redeem us.

*Opening Song:

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

#154

*OPENING PRAYER

(prayed together)

While we are waiting, come to us, God. Reveal your presence in our time of worship. Guide our steps in our speaking and our doing. Flow through our lives, our church, and our world with your steadfast love, unending faithfulness, righteous justice, and mysterious peace. In patient anticipation we pray.

TIME FOR CHILDREN AND THE YOUNG AT HEART

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(prayed together)

We confess that whatever our fine might have been that it has been paid, God of Comfort, yet we still insist on earning our way into your heart. We confess that you are beyond patient with us, but wish you would act quickly against those who hurt us. We confess that while your word will stand forever, it is our words of pain and anger that cause long term harm to others.

Your Messenger has come, Approaching God, crying out of your forgiveness and hope. Through Jesus our Savior, you speak to us: not of punishment, but of peace; not of judgment, but of justice; not of a sentence, but salvation. And we offer our hearts in thanksgiving and hope.

A TIME FOR SILENT REFLECTION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

One: Hear the Good News God speaks to you: I love you; I forgive you; I restore you to new life.

Many: We will not ignore the fact that God comes: not to condemn, but to comfort us; not to scold, but to speak tenderly to us of hope, of love, of joy. Thanks be to God.

SHARING THE FIRST SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 1:1-8

*AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

By faith, Mary let go of fear, and engendered a mothering God. This faith may lead us through labyrinths of doubt, laughing hysterically, shouting in protest, lurching in denial, finally making it to our place to stand.

By faith, Joseph took comfort from a dream, embracing complex, reconstituted, extended family relationships. This faith might reshape our preconceptions, birthing new ways of being family.

By faith, wise ones followed the path of a new star to a strange land, to an undistinguished stable. This faith might sometimes lead us down unpaved tracks, with people we don’t recognize, to destinations we didn’t plan.

Faith is the opposite of belief: a bright-side-up coin whose shadow-side is hope.

Faith is relationship and way of life: caring for orphans and widows, casting out demons of self-doubt and despair, and occasionally raising the dead.

This is our faith: Living as if we matter. Living with uncertainty yet acting with confidence, walking the star-led spiral to the heart of everything: God in us, now—and here.

*GLORIA PATRI

#734

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world with-out end. A-men, A-men.

Sunday, December 10: 10:00am- Worship
Sunday School
Coffee
Christmas family Offering
Cookie Plates for Shut-ins

Tuesday, December 12: 9:30-11am.-Pastor at Feed Mill

Wednesday, December 13: 5:30pm.- Cookie Baking with Families from Care Team

Sunday, December 17: 10:00am- Worship
Sunday School
Coffee
Christmas Fund Offering

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross offering will be taken December 17.

The 10 Reflections from Our Daily Bread, O Holy Night, Carols of Christmas and the December, January, February issue of “Our Daily Bread” may be picked up in the Fellowship Hall entry.

Poinsettias-If you would like to order a poinsettia this year, they are \$13. Please let the church office know how many you would like and who it is in honor or in memory of.

The Mitten Tree is up. Donations of hats, waterproof mittens or gloves, scarves, socks, and underwear are welcome. We will be collecting through the end of December. Thank you.

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