

First Congregational United Church of Christ  
"Where No One Is A Stranger"  
Third Sunday of Advent  
December 17, 2023

## PRELUDE

## RINGING OF THE BELL

## GREETINGS, GOOD NEWS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, JESUS ENCOUNTERS

### Lighting the Advent Candle of Joy

One: Isaiah 61:10 says: "I will greatly rejoice in God, my whole being shall exult in my God; for God has clothed me with the garments of salvation, God has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." The last two Sundays we have reflected on the Advent themes of "hope" and "Peace" This Sunday, we center on "Joy."

Today is the Gaudete Sunday—the 3rd Sunday of Advent. It is a joyous celebration that is set up to provide relief or a break from the more reflective rituals, as well as focus away from all of the hardships in our midst. The pink candle that we light this morning reminds us to be encouraged, to lean into a softer sentiment.

**Many: Let's light the candle of joy!**

*(the pink candle is lit)*

### \*CALL TO WORSHIP

(read responsively)

One: When God restores our fortune, our dreams will come true.

**Many: We will sing "Glory!" to our God; we will rejoice in our Savior's birth.**

One: Our mouths shall be filled with laughter; joy shall chime from our lips.

**Many: God has made it clear: those who serve are God's children.**

One: Then we will proclaim: 'look what God has done!'

**Many: so others will know beyond any doubt how the Holy One has blessed us with hope.**

One: We wept- now we will cheer "Joy! Joy!" We were lost - now we will run home laughing.

**Many: For God has picked us up where we fell; God has kept the promises made so long ago.**

**\*Opening Song:**

"O for a Thousand Tongues to sing"

#96

### \*OPENING PRAYER

(prayed together)

**God of Dreams, you have done great things for your people. From times of old, you awaken the faithful to the dawn of your glory. Fill our mouths with laughter. Loose our**

**tongues with shouts of joy. Anoint us with the oil of gladness and make it known among all people that we will live as oaks of righteousness, the planting of our God.**

## TIME FOR CHILDREN AND THE YOUNG AT HEART

### CALL TO CONFESSION

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(prayed together)

**Womb of Creation, we often get caught up in what we do not have –the material things we lack, the access and privilege we may lack, the answers, even, that seem to escape us in crucial moments.**

**Forgive us for the times we forgot to remember you. Hold us accountable for the moments we failed to see you in the blessings of ages past. Help us reconnect with our joy and our gratitude. Remind us to name our joys, our miracles, our deliverances, our redemptions one by one by one, for you are there in them all.**

### A TIME FOR SILENT REFLECTION

### WORDS OF ASSURANCE

One: Go, and take God's Good News to others: to those held captive by sin; to those cradling broken hearts; to those grieving lost relationships. God forgives us all and makes us new.

**Many: Even as we rejoice in God's mercy, we will tell everyone we meet, "God has done such wondrous things for us, and wants to do the same for you!" Thanks be to God!**

### SHARING THE FIRST SCRIPTURE READING

John 1:6-8, 19-29

### \*AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**We believe in God, creator and lover of the earth, origin and destiny of us all.**

**We believe in Jesus the Christ—God coming to us in the fragile promise of a baby yet unborn—who emerges as the herald of hope, God's laughter in the face of despair. Plunged into death and hell, he broke free the captives, and is leading the way to the land of promise where justice and peace will flourish.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, who implants the seed of truth, brings us to birth as the body of Christ, and empowers us to confront and transform all that is corrupt, degrading and deceitful.**

**We believe in the coming reign of God. Announced by the Baptist, it has drawn near to us in Jesus, and will be consummated in the glorious marriage of earth and heaven, when all who have passed through the world's deep sorrow will be raised from the waters, robed in righteousness, and gathered into the joyous fulfilment of God's desire. For the coming of that day on this day, we work and pray: Come, Lord Jesus, Come!**

**\*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.

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE** Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 read from *The Message*

**MESSAGE:** "Time Out For Joy" Pastor Chris

**Prayers of The People/The Lord's Prayer** (with debts/debtors)

**PRESENTING OUR GIFTS**

**OFFERTORY**

**\*DOXOLOGY** #34  
Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, you heavenly host; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

**\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

God of every blessing, we dedicate these gifts that have been shared for the fortification of the beloved community. Let these gifts usher joy into this world and signal to the people that God is still setting captives free.

**\*Closing Song:** "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" #185

**\*Going Forth with the Peace of Christ**

**POSTLUDE**

**\*Indicates all who are able please stand**

Other Lectionary Scripture Readings: Psalm 126, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

The Call to Worship (adapted), Call to Confession, and Words of Assurance are by Thom M. Shuman from Lectionary Liturgies. The Opening Prayer is by B.J. Beu from The Abingdon Worship Annual-2023 edited by Mary Scifres and B.J. Beu. The Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy (adapted), Prayer of Confession, and Offering Prayer of Dedication are from Worship Ways-Worship Resources for the United Church of Christ. The Affirmation of Faith is by Nathan Nettleton, and posted on his [Laughingbird](http://Laughingbird.com) website.

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Worship Leader: Pastor Chris Burtnett  
Lector: David Burrow  
Organist: Antonia Rupert  
December Radio Sponsor: Mick & Kris Schlievert

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*First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
165 Years  
315 Moore Street – Algona, IA 50511  
515-295-2845*

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

Tuesday, December 19: 9:30-11am.-Pastor at Feed Mill

Sunday, December 24: No Morning Worship  
7pm. – Christmas Eve Worship

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 deadline for information in the bulletin is Tuesday, December 19.

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.

The Radio sign-up sheet is in the Parlor. The rate per Sunday is \$32.50-which is \$130.00 for months with 4 Sundays and \$162.50 for months with five Sundays.

This is the last day of Sunday School this year and will resume on January 7, 2024.