



## Silent Meditation

We are God's creative works in process. God alone knows what we shall become. What might God have in store in the fullness of our time? In the beginning, God created Light. In Mary, God became flesh. What will God become in us? Is there room in us for God's seed to take root and grow? God has visited us with grace and favor. Are we ready to become Light?

~ Thomas Hoffman

The stars have no voice, no way to herald the news of God, but they have something greater than words— they shine in darkness. And those who have eyes to see follow the light right into the presence of Jesus. Can you imagine how the world would be if more of us acted like stars pointing the way to God? If our spirits were so filled with light, that others could find their way to God simply by following our light?

~Renée Miller

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
A SEASON OF HOPE  
FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

December 3, 2017

10:55 AM

Gathering Music

Jared Fischer

Welcome and Announcements

Nancy Ellett Allison

One: May the peace of Christ be with you all.

Many: **And also with you.**

*(Please pass the friendship pads so that all worshippers  
might have the opportunity to sign them)*

\* Call to Worship

Frank Wright

One: A star in the sky, carols in the air, candles in the window,  
wreaths on the door, friends gathering; already we are caught  
up in the rush of the season.

Many: **Calm us down, Lord. Bring hope and peace to our hectic  
worlds.**

One: Let us listen to the lessons of the years and the centuries, not  
just to impressions of the moment.

Many: **Let us, through the great traditions of our faith, join with the  
shepherds of Bethlehem, the wise men from the east, and  
seekers throughout the ages, to welcome the One who is  
always coming to us anew.**

One: Let us this Advent wait in expectation as we remember your  
curious ways.

Many: **As we wait, cleanse us. As we wait, mold us. We are your  
people and we will wait for You with hope and anticipation!**

\* Passing of the Peace

Frank Wright

One: As we wait with hope, let us now greet one another as a sign of  
God's peace, for the peace of the Christ child is here to stay.

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

\* *All rise in body or spirit* ☩ *Sing Response* ✕ *Hymnals located below pews*

\* Worship in Music

“Of the Spirit’s Love Begotten”

DIVINUM MYSTERIUM

Of the Spirit's love begotten, when the worlds were yet to be,  
Is the Alpha and Omega, who’s our Source and Destiny.  
This one made all things that are and have been,  
And that future years will see, evermore and evermore.

Blessed dawning of salvation, as the Word is breathed in grace,  
Into earthly flesh receiving, God incarnate taking place;  
Now the light of God revealed,  
Through a child with human face, evermore and evermore.

People everywhere adore him; angel hosts, make melody!  
Heights and depths break forth in praising! Worship God in infancy.  
Let no one on earth be silent!  
Celebrate in harmony evermore and evermore.

“Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus”

HYFRYDOL

Come, Thou long expected Jesus Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us, Let us find our rest in Thee.  
Israel’s Strength and Consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear Desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver, Born a child, you came to reign,  
Born to rule on earth forever, Come be known in us again.  
By Thine own eternal Spirit Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By Thine all sufficient merit, Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

2017 Pilgrim Legacy Grant Recipients

Cheri Lovell

Lighting the Advent Candle

Cheri Lovell

Julie McElmurry, Ra'Shawn Flourney, Blake Hart

**One:** Today we light the candle of hope. The people of Israel hoped in God's promises and were not disappointed. As we begin our Advent pilgrimage, grant us the courage to hope: hope for God's presence, hope for God's peace, hope in God's promises.

**Many:** **Show us the creative power of hope. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you, that we may walk in the light of Christ.**

**One:** Christ is always coming, always entering a troubled world, a wounded heart. And so we light the first candle, the candle of hope, and dare to express our hope for healing, and the well-being of all creation.

**Many:** **Lighting this candle, we celebrate the hope we have in Jesus Christ!** *(The first candle is lit.)*

Advent Carol

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

VENI EMMANUEL

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel

That mourns in lonely exile here / Until the Son of God appear.

***Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.***

Children's Message & Offering

Nancy Ellett Allison

*(Following the Children's Message, preschoolers go to extended care and those in kindergarten through fifth grade to Children's Church.)*

\* Gospel Lesson

Mark 13:21-37

Gregg Walker

And if anyone says to you at that time, ‘Look! Here is the Messiah!’ or ‘Look! There he is!’ – do not believe it. False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be alert; I have already told you everything. But in those days, then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. ...But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.

One: May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Many: **Thanks be to God. Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.**

Pastoral Prayer

Nancy Ellett Allison

Hebrew Lesson

Isaiah 64:1-9

Cheri Dennis

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence...to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait on God. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O Living One, you are our God; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your

hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O God, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

One: May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Many: **Thanks be to God. Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.**

Sermon "All Your People" Nancy Ellett Allison

Offertory Invitation Cheri Dennis

Offertory Music

\* Doxology OLD HUNDREDTH

φ **To God all glorious heavenly Light,  
To Christ revealed in earthly night,  
To God the Spirit now we raise  
Our joyful songs of thankful praise. Amen.**

Offertory Dedication Cheri Dennis

## SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Christ's Table

One: The prophets foretold it: the desert burst into bloom. Angelic messengers delivered news; a priest lost his speech; a young woman found her voice.

Many: **In this season of Advent, the scriptures revive old stories and bring new understandings. In the face of critics and skeptics, our faith cries out, resilient, like a baby from a manger bed.**

One: From that Bethlehem beginning, Jesus, baptized in the Jordan, spent his life serving others that all might know the compassionate attention of a loving God.

Many: **Today, Jesus serves us yet again, as we gather at this Table of welcome for all.**

Words of Institution Nancy Ellett Allison

Prayer of Consecration (*unison*)

Dear Jesus of Advent, you remain a sacred mystery to us. You have brought Good News for all the people and we will not be afraid, for you are here. We are hungry for your love which surpasses all our understanding; we are thirsty for your spirit that never runs dry. In this meal nourish our souls, feed our minds, quench our deepest longings and forgive our transgressions, that we may glorify you every day of our lives. Amen.

*(Please come forward as directed by the ushers.*

*Communion is received by intinction. Please take bread or a gluten free wafer and dip it into the cup to receive both elements.*

*The Communion elements are bread and grape juice.)*

Music for Communion                      “The Word”    by Steve Schallert

The word, the word, the word / There has always been the word  
But then the word took on flesh / Like a homeless baby in distress,  
Jesus walked into the fray / To prove a reconciling way  
The word, the word, the living, saving word

Oh my heart, my heart, my heart, / Like the sea that once did part  
To keep the devils at bay, / From left to right it sways  
Oh like a tired ocean wave, / All my heart now craves is  
The word, the word, the living, saving word

*Chorus:* From darkness, to darkness, to darkness, to light  
The word became flesh to bring dead things to life

Yet it's a groaning, groaning world / Even the trees are begging for  
A new place to lay their roots / Where wars for oil will not destroy.  
We know a peace that lasts beyond a day  
A hope that's deep enough to stay the world, the world  
The living, saving word. (*Chorus*)

Prayer of Thanksgiving (*unison*)

Holy Creator, Bread of Life, Everlasting Salvation,  
A light shines in the night and the night will not overcome it.  
In this meal we have been replenished and strengthened,  
the light of your love rekindled within.  
May we be bold as we carry this light into the world. Amen.

\* Hymn 159

“As with Gladness Those of Old”

DIX

As with gladness those of old  
Did the guiding star behold;  
As with joy they hailed its light  
Leading onward, beaming bright;  
So, true Morning Star, may see  
Evermore your splendor see.

As with joyful steps they sped  
To that lowly manger bed,  
There to bend the knee before  
One whom heaven and earth adore;  
So may we with willing feet  
Ever seek your mercy seat.

As they offered gifts most rare  
At that manger plain and bare,  
So may we with holy joy,  
Pure and free from sin's alloy,  
All our costliest treasures bring  
Christ to you from whom they spring.

Holy Jesus, every day  
Keep us in the narrow way;  
And when mortal things are past,  
Bring our ransomed souls at last  
Where they need no star to guide,  
Where no clouds your glory hide.

\* Benediction

Nancy Ellett Allison

Postlude

Jared Fischer

# CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

Christmas Eve Chili supper 5:30-6:30

(Sign up in the Gathering Room to bring a pot of chili, toppings, cookies, or help with clean up)

Candlelight Service at 7:00pm

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

### WELCOME TO HOLY COVENANT

We welcome all who worship with us at Holy Covenant. Guests and members, we invite you to sign our friendship pads so that we may have a record of your worshipping with us and be in touch with you during the week. Members, please indicate any changes in your contact information. We invite our visitors and members to linger following worship and join us in light refreshments and conversation.

### HCUCG ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BAZAAR TODAY FOLLOWING WORSHIP

Twenty percent of sales will benefit the Guatemala Missions Fund.

### JOIN THE HOLY COVENANT CHANCEL CHOIR FOR CHRISTMAS MUSIC!

Your voice is needed during this Advent season! We are planning some great choral music for our Lessons and Carols service on December 17; all voice types are needed and especially male voices. Rehearsals will be held each Sunday following worship from 12:30-2:30 with child care available, and on Thursdays through December 14 from 7:00-9:00 PM. Please contact Jared Fischer at [music@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:music@holycovenantucc.org) if you would like to attend.

### ANGEL TREE

Thanks for such an amazing to response to our Angel Tree this year. We have only a few angels left! We need a total of ten \$25 Wal-Mart gift cards for families who receive services through Supportive Community Housing

Services. Bring your \$25 Wal-Mart card by Sunday, December 10th. Please return your unwrapped gifts with the Angel tag attached to the church by

Sunday, December 17th. IF you want to donate money instead, we will be glad to shop for you. Questions? lisacmsw@hotmail.com.

### **A HOLIDAY LOVE OFFERING FOR THE HCUCC STAFF AND CLERGY**

During this joyful time of year, we ask those of you who are able to consider contributing to a Holiday Love Offering for our HCUCC clergy and staff. The offering will be divided across all of our dedicated staff members. We have wonderful, dedicated leadership and support who work very hard to make Holy Covenant a place of welcome, warmth, and spiritual renewal. Please give your gifts to Martha Bomely by December 10<sup>th</sup> which will allow time to organize and distribute gifts on December 17. Thank you for considering our church staff as you plan out your holiday giving plans. Electronic funds may be sent to martha.bomely@gmail.com through The Zelle<sup>SM</sup> Network.

### **ADVENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKLETS NOW AVAILABLE**

*“Watch”* is the title of the new UCC Writers Group Advent devotional booklets. A challenging, inspiring, comforting word of hope is offered for each day of Advent. One per family please.

### **NEED A GIFT IDEA? ORDER YOUR MEMORIAL GARDEN BRICK NOW**

Please consider ordering a memorial garden brick for \$100 to honor your special occasion or loved one through an inscribed brick. Order forms are available at the church or you may contact Debbie Davis at debbiekdavisnc@gmail.com for an electronic order form.

### **SANDWICH MINISTRY SABBATICAL**

The sandwich ministry will take a break for December during time of Linn's recovery following shoulder surgery. Please check back in January when we resume our ministry in feeding those in need.

### **12x12 SERVE. STAND UP. SHARE.**

Take action with Missions & Justice! We need to be heard; we need to act! M&J wants to know how the people of Holy Covenant are responding to the many issues facing our people and our society today. Write your mission, drop it in the basket in the Gathering Room and M&J will track them as the year goes along.

- Support the Jamel Niner Pantry with food items and/or gently used professional clothing for UNCC students
- Pick an Angel gift or gift card from the Angel Tree
- Volunteer with Room In The Inn. See the sign up board in the gathering room.

Elder for December: Kathi Smith, kathleenie53@msn.com or 704-614-7674

Deacons for December: Renee Brown, Micheal Hall

Recyclers: Suzanne Lamorey

Greeters: Anne Hayes, Judi Lord

Ushers: Kelly Gimlin, Jill Gregg, J.P. Griffin, Barbara Schneller

Media: Brian Hankins, Suzanne Lamorey, Renee Brown

Tabulators: Terry Raley-Dennis, Kelly Gimlin

Refreshments: Hospitality

### **PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER**

#### **Members**

The Andes Magraw family in the death of Tom's father, Dick Magraw  
Gail Bushman, Frank & Charlotte Carbone, David Cable, Donna Collins, Linn  
Finger, Ginny & Bob Fisher, Phil Kaveler, Helen Lambert, Irene Mikkelson,  
Isabelle Reedy Powell, Yami Senturias, Ed Sharp, Anita Taylor, Caroline Utz

#### **Friends & Family Members**

Ray Adams (Linda Burby), Marj Carmine (Donna Collins), Kathy Gibson (Jeff  
Edwards-Knight), Peace Hale (Ben Hale), Alice Huskins (Jared Fischer), Beth  
Poyer Meyer, Aldo Sanchez (Alice Phelan), Jessie Sharp (Terry Raley-Dennis),  
Florence Simmons (Dawn Simmons), Cynthia & Tommy Simpson, Naomi  
Scheiperpeter, Becky Neese Smith (Diane Neese), Luz Soto & family (Aida  
Marcial), Doris Storie (Garrett Barlow), Wayne & Libby Walters (Barry  
Holcomb), Gary & Wanda Gilbert West (John Rapp), Elizabeth Wilson (Donna  
Collins)

**Holy Covenant United Church of Christ**

**Rev. Nancy Ellett Allison, Ph.D., Pastor**

**Ms. Cheri Dennis, Ministry Intern**

**Mr. Jared Fischer, Director of Music**

**Mrs. Dawn Simmons, Executive Assistant**

**Rev. Barbara Thomas, Interim Minister for Church & Family Life**

3501 West W.T. Harris Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28269-8510

[www.holycovenantucc.org](http://www.holycovenantucc.org) [office@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:office@holycovenantucc.org) 704-599-9810