

Holy Covenant

United Church of Christ

Advent Journeys



Silent Meditation

Each year we repeat Advent rituals. We sing the hymns and recite the familiar verses. Time overlaps, the present and future tenses proclaiming God's transformation even as we still long for it.

What would it look like to really let Advent proclamations seep into our weariest places, where despair creeps in and threatens to take hold? How might we find hope when our activist efforts seem to fail—not just hope for someday but hope for now?

Maybe hope is as basic as refusing to give up and sell out. Hope is continuing to be God's hands and feet in the world, even when the odds are against us. Hope is openness to transformation, listening and looking for signs of God's action happening all around us, just like Jesus told John's disciples to tell John.

Hope is trust in the character of our God as one who brings justice to the oppressed, not just tomorrow but today.

Hope is knowing that God acts in human history for liberation and restoration.

We only need the eyes to see it and the ears to hear it.

~Fred Craddock

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Please silence cell phones

December 15, 2019

Prelude and Chiming of the Hour

Jon Weddell

Welcome and Announcements ✕

Nancy Ellett Allison

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

Many: **And also with you.**

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

Opening Voluntary

Jon Weddell

* Call to Worship

Jordan Robinson

One: This is the season of holy waiting.

Many: **We wait for the time when the desert will bloom abundantly.
We watch for the day when all God's people will come
together with singing.**

One: As farmers wait for rainfall, as prisoners wait for freedom,

Many: **We wait for the coming of God.**

One: As exiles yearn for home, as peacemakers yearn for justice,

Many: **We long for the coming of God.**

One: As travelers search for shelter, as disciples look for answers,

Many: **We prepare for the coming of God.**

One: We wait while the dawning light appears on the horizon.

Many: **We wait with joy as we journey in the light of God!**

* Passing of the Peace

Jordan Robinson

One: Let us now greet one another as a sign of God's peace, for the
peace of Christ is here to stay.

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

** All rise in body or spirit ☩ Sing Response ✕ Seating by Ushers*

My heart sings out with joyful praise to God who raises me,
Who came to me when I was low and changed my destiny.
The Holy One, the Living God, is always full of grace
To those who seek their Maker's will in every time and place.

The arm of God is strong and just to scatter all the proud.
The tyrants tumble from their thrones and vanish like a cloud.
The hungry all are satisfied; the rich are sent away.
The poor of earth who suffer long will welcome God's new day.

The promise made in ages past at last has come to be,
For God has come in power to save, to set all people free.
Remembering those who wait to see salvation's dawning day,
Our Savior comes to all who weep to wipe their tears away.

“The Word”

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

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
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/ Where 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*)

Lighting the Advent Candle

Kim & Bill Tyler

One: We have lit two candles—for peace and hope. Today we light the third candle—the candle of joy. Joy is like an underground spring that wells up within us, but joy is also a choice, an attitude.

Many: Today we open ourselves to joy, trusting that God has already planted it in us. May we tend our joy from busyness, welcome it in song and lights dancing in the night. May we enlarge our joy by sharing it with others.

One: God, we open ourselves to you, knowing you delight in our being, that You created us for joy-filled hearts and lives.

Many: Fill us with the kind of joy that cannot be contained, but must be shared. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you that we may walk in the light of Christ.

Three candles are lit.

Advent Carol

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

GESU BAMBINO

O come, o come, Emmanuel, and end this gloom of night.

Bring hope to the world, bring peace to the earth,

And fill us with love’s pure light.

Bring hope and joy and peace,

And fill us with love’s pure light.

Children’s Offering & Message

Fred Robinson

(Following the Children’s Message, children below first grade may go to extended care or return to sit with their parents.)

Hebrew Scripture Lesson Psalm 146:5-10

Suzanne Lamorey

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God,
who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith for ever;
who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free;
the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous.

The Lord watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the Lord!

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

Fred Robinson

Anthem "Jesus, the Light of the World" arr. G.D. Elderkin
Lisa Cloninger, Melissa McQueen-Simmons, Felicia Robinson and
Kathleen Smith vocals; Jon Weddell, piano

* Gospel Lesson

Matthew 11:2-15

Fred Robinson

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."

Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. Let anyone with ears listen!

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

"Are You the One?"

Nancy Ellett Allison

Offertory Invitation

Fred Robinson

Offertory

Jon Weddell

* Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH

☩ **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

Fred Robinson

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

PLEASE SIGN OUR ATTENDANCE REGISTER

WELCOME to all who worship today at Holy Covenant! Guests and members- please sign an attendance register and then pass it back to its starting point, taking note of who is worshipping near you and greet them.

Advent Journeys through Worship Lessons & Carols of the Incarnation

December 22, 10:55 a.m.

LED BY OUR CHANCEL CHOIR, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF BRIDGET GREEN, AND THE MUSIC COOPERATIVE, OUR HANDBELL CHOIR AND OTHER MUSICIANS, WE WILL SING AND CELEBRATE THE COMING OF CHRIST THROUGH MUSIC AND STORY.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 7p.m.

Christmas Eve Chili Supper 5:30-6:30 p.m.

BRING YOUR FAVORITE DESSERT TO SHARE.
SIGN UP IN THE GATHERING ROOM FOR
ACCOMPANIMENTS TO THE MEAL.
COME! ENJOY THIS LONG-STANDING
CHRISTMAS TRADITION!

RETIREMENT CELEBRATION FOR PASTOR NANCY, DECEMBER 29

There will be an open house at Holy Covenant UCC on December 29, from 4-7pm in celebration of Pastor Nancy's 15 years in service at this church and well wishing to her as her Journey Continues! All are welcome!

TWO SEPARATE OFFERINGS WILL BE TAKEN FOR PASTOR NANCY

1. A Love Offering for Pastor Nancy will be collected by December 15th in person to Cheryl Milam, by mail (10004 Falmouth Lane, Charlotte, 28369), or at worship (checks payable to Cheryl, or in cash). Contributions should be given to Cheryl Milam no later than today.
2. A Solar Panel Fund has been established so gifts can be made in honor of Pastor Nancy through the church and will be tax deductible - those offerings can be made payable to Holy Covenant UCC.

HOLIDAY LOVE OFFERINGS FOR HCUCC STAFF AND REV. FRED ROBINSON

During this joyful time of year, we ask those of you who are able to consider contributing to a Holiday Love Offering for our Associate Pastor Rev. Fred Robinson and our excellent Staff. Thank you for considering our church staff as you plan out your holiday giving plans. Today is the last day to contribute, please see Tom Magraw.

HCUCC SEEKS INTERIM ASSOCIATE PASTOR

The Personnel Committee is accepting applications for the position of Interim Associate Pastor. This is a part-time temporary position which will run concurrently with the Interim Pastor position which has been filled. We would like to receive applications from interested persons within the congregation. Please mail your resume with a letter of interest to the attention of the church office, or email contactus@HolyCovenantUCC.org. Job description is available upon request. Term will be approximately 12 months in duration, but not guaranteed.

ANGEL TREE & FILL THE BUS PROGRAMS

We have our Christmas giving tree and giving box ready for contributions. Pastor Ra'Shawn Flournoy of Movement Church, a Pilgrim Legacy Fund grantee, is filling their outreach bus with toys for young children. We have a big shiny wrapped box ready for unwrapped toys for toddlers and young children under the age of 8, in order to help "fill the bus"! Thank you to all who have taken the Silver Bells Ornaments from our Christmas giving tree that provides Christmas cheer for seniors in nursing homes who have no family to

remember them. Gifts are due back by Wednesday, December 18th. Questions? Contact Suzanne Lamorey at 704-654-7267 or suzlam@yahoo.com.

WE COULDN'T PROVIDE OUR WARM WELCOME WITHOUT THE HELP OF:

Elder for December: Joy Decker, Joylikerain@gmail.com or 704-579-1694

Deacons for December: Cheri Dennis, Tom Magraw

Greeters: Anne Hayes, Lisa Sherman

Ushers: Tom Magraw, Chris Edwards, Suzanne Lamorey, Kelly Gimlin

Media: Brian Hankins, Lisa Cloninger

Tabulators: Alice Phelan, Kelly Gimlin

Recyclers: Suzanne Lamorey

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

The family and friends of Donna Collins.

Frank & Charlotte Carbone, Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Julie Klever, Helen Lambert, Karen Long, Irene Mikkelson, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Jerry & Marion Rhyne, Deb & Yvette Ross, Beth Sharp, Mamie Stokes

Friends & Family Members

Ray Adams (Linda Burby), Andrew Bomely (Martha Bomely), Ann Ebright (Julie Klever), Judy Furr (Robbie Furr & Peter Jawidzik), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Faye Grumbles (Linda Clark), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Will & Addie May Hong (Jim Hong), Marilyn Lafferty (Kim Tyler), Bob Lyon (Melissa Noll), Ron Mann (Robert Shepherd), Carolyn Marshall (Linda Clark), Thibault Ossenbühl (Melissa Noll), Roshani Parikh (Nishi Griffin), Joe Robinson (Bill & Kim Tyler), Renee & Aiden Rohn (Debbie Davis), Jack Ross (Anne Findlay-Chamberlain), Rev. Jeanette Salley (JoAnn Jellison), Ken & Evelyn Sell (Robert Shepherd), Deborah Selma (Kathleen Wagner), Irene Sharpe (Robert Shepherd), Colin Spencer (Lloyd & Gussie Spencer), Gene Sullivan (Jason Sullivan), John Teague, Dorothy Underwood (Keith & Cheri Dennis), Kathryn Vickery (Ed Vickery), Gary West (John Rapp), Wanda Williams (John Rapp)

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

Rev. Fred Robinson, Associate Pastor

Mr. Jon Weddell, Accompanist

Mrs. Dawn Simmons, Executive Assistant

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

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