

Holy Covenant
United Church of Christ
Advent Journeys



Silent Meditation

To begin by always thinking of love as an action rather than a feeling is one way in which anyone using the word...assumes accountability and responsibility...
If we were constantly remembering that love is as love does,
we would not use the word in a manner that devalues and degrades its meaning.

~ bell hooks

Lo, in the silent night
A child to God is born
And all is brought again
That ere was lost or lorn.

Could but thy soul, O mortal
Become a silent night!
God would be born in thee
And set all things aright.

~ 15th Century Verse

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
LESSONS & CAROLS FOR ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

Please silence cell phones

December 22, 2019

Prelude

Adam Watkins

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

“Silent Night”
arr. Theodore Beck

Handbell Choir

* Call to Worship

J.P. Griffin

One: Holy God, Generous Lover of all, we come to worship longing to abide in love, as lavish and wide as the stretching ocean and yet as intimate as a tear.

Many: **We yearn to feel your presence flowing among us. Emmanuel, the promised one, be as near to us as our breathing.**

One: As we sing and pray, speak and listen, let the light of love shine in our midst,

Many: **For it is through this world-changing love that we witness you moving in and among us. God-with-us, may we know your indwelling presence in this and every hour.**

* Passing of the Peace

J.P. Griffin

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*

Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
As you sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth;
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, give thanks and sing.

Shepherds in the fields abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
Yonder shines the infant light:
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, give thanks and sing.

Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of Nations,
Guided by Christ's natal star:
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, give thanks and sing.

Saints, before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly, your prayers attending,
Christ beside you shall appear.
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, give thanks and sing.

“Love’s Pure Light”
Chancel Choir, Handbell Choir, Congregation

by Joel Raney

Lighting the Advent Candle

the Robinson Family

Fred, Felicia, Daniel, Kyra, Jordan

One: Love. Everything begins with Love. From the beginning of creation to the end of time, God’s love sustains all life.

Many: **As we open our hearts to love we recognize hope shining in the most ancient of promises.**

One: Love. Everything continues with Love. From strangers across oceans to neighbors next door, God’s love dwells in everything.

Many: **When we live with love, we see peace shining in each and every beloved face we encounter.**

One: Love. Everything thrives with Love. From the most challenging struggle to the most wondrous delight, God’s love flows through everything.

Many: **When we offer love with open hearts, we find joy shining in the surprises that undo us and transform us.**

One: Love. Everything culminates in Love. From the greatest ruler to the tiniest baby, God’s love changes everything.

Many: **Prepare the way for love and you will find love shining in each and every breath that whispers: O come, O come Emmanuel.**

Four 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

Nancy Ellett Allison

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

Lesson I: A Light Has Dawned

Gregg Walker

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

* Hymn 110

“Now Bless the God of Israel”

FOREST GREEN

1. Now bless the God of Is-ra-el,
who comes in love and power,
who rais-es from the roy-al house
de-liv-ernce in this hour.
Through ho-ly prophets God has sworn
to free us from a-larm,
to save us from the heav-y hand
of all who wish us harm.
2. Re-mem-ber-ing the cov-e-nant,
God res-cues us from fear,
that we might serve in hol-i-ness
and peace from year to year;
And you, my child, shall go be-fore
to preach, to proph-e-sy,
that all may know the ten-der love,
the grace of God most high.
3. In ten-der mer-cy, God will send
the day-spring from on high,
our ris-ing sun, the light of life
for those who sit and sigh.
God comes to guide our way to peace,
that death shall reign no more.
Sing prais-es to the Ho-ly One!
O wor-ship and a-dore!

* Lesson II: The Mystery of the Incarnation

Yvette Wynn

John 1:1-5, 10-14

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*)

Lesson III: Jesus' Birth Foretold

Fred Robinson

Luke 1:26-35, 38

Hymn 132 “Joy to the World”

ANTIOCH

Joy to the world! The Lord is come:
Let earth its praises bring;
Let every heart prepare Christ room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

**Christ rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of God's righteousness
And wonders of God's love,
And wonders of God's love
And wonders, wonders of God's love**

Lesson IV: The Time Arrived

Amanda Gragg

Luke 2:1-7

Chancel Choir "Long Ago on a Winter's Morning" arr. George L.O Strid

Lesson V: The Shepherds and the Angels

Fred Robinson

Luke 2:8-12

Chancel Choir "Celtic Noel" arr. Patrick Tierney

Lesson VI: Glory to God

Yvette Wynn

Luke 2:13-16

Chancel Choir "Christmas Song of Peace" Austin C Lovelace

Lesson VII: Joseph Dreams of God-With-Us

Gregg Walker

Matthew 1:18-25

Prayer of Response Gregg Walker

O God of depth and mystery, You call us beyond convention to a way of risky faithfulness. Fill our dreams with your truth and our minds with your discernment so that we, like Joseph, may awaken with confidence and joy to expand our lives and make room for You. Amen.

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see you lie!
Above your deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
Yet in your dark street shines forth the everlasting light,
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing, and voices ring with peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the glorious love of heaven.
No one discerns God's coming, but in this world of sin,
Where yearning souls long to be whole, the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come with us, abide in us, our Lord Emmanuel!

Offertory Invitation

Fred Robinson

Offertory Music

Adam Watkins

* 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

Fred Robinson

*** Lesson VIII: Christ the Light of the World**

Nancy Ellett Allison

Advent Credo by Allen Bosak, adapted by Daniel Berrigan

One: It is not true that creation and the human family are doomed to destruction and loss—

Many: **This is true: For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life;**

One: It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction—

Many: **This is true: I have come that they may have life, and that abundantly.**

One: It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction rule forever—

Many: **This is true: Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, his name shall be called wonderful councilor, mighty God, the Everlasting, the Prince of peace.**

One: It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule the world—

Many: **This is true: To me is given authority in heaven and on earth, and lo I am with you, even until the end of the world.**

One: It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church before we can be peacemakers—

Many: **This is true: I will pour out my spirit on all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall have dreams.**

One: It is not true that our hopes for liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity of peace are not meant for this earth and for this history—

Many: **This is true: The hour comes, and it is now, that the true worshipers shall worship God in spirit and in truth. So, let us celebrate Advent in hope, even hope against hope. Let us see visions of love and peace and justice. Let us affirm with humility with joy, with faith, with courage: Jesus Christ—the light of the world.**

Chancel Choir, Music Co-op "Light of the World" by Lauren Daigle

* Benediction Nancy Ellett Allison

* Benediction Response (144) MENDELSSOHN

ϕ Hail the Bearer of God's peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life our Savior brings, risen with radiant, healing wings.
Mildly laying glory by, born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us all from earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the Christ-child bring!"

* Postlude Adam Watkins

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.

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!

THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED DECEMBER 25 & 26

GUEST PREACHER DECEMBER 29

To join in celebrating Nancy's year-end retirement, The Rev. Dian Jackson-Davis will be our guest preacher. For 18 years Nancy and Dian have partnered together in leading retreats and conferences throughout the UCC Southern Conference. We are delighted to welcome her to our pulpit for that day.

YEAR-END GIVING

Holy Covenant's fiscal year ends on Tuesday, December 31 so any contributions for 2019 or prepayments for 2020 must be received at the church by noon, or postmarked on or before 12/31/2019 if being mailed. Questions about year-end contributions, stock gifts or electronic giving may be directed to Dawn Simmons at office@holycovenantucc.org. We are grateful for the generosity of all at Holy Covenant!

OFFERING FOR PASTOR NANCY

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.

CONSISTORY RETREAT, JANUARY 11 & 12

Our Consistory will be gathering the weekend of January 11 & 12 to begin discussing ways to best serve Holy Covenant. If you have any ideas, projects or concerns you would like to share with the leadership team, please feel free to contact one of them. Officers for the New Year are: Tom Magraw, President, JoAnn Jellison, Vice-President, Lisa Sherman, Secretary, and Kathi Smith, Treasurer. Other members of Consistory include: Suzanne Lamorey, Robert Shepherd, Cheri Dennis, Joy Decker, JoAnn Jellison, Holly Middleton, and Ed Vickery, and incoming Class of 2022, Lisa Cloninger, Jeff Hughes, Kathy Habel, Jim Dwiggins, and Vondalyn McQueen-Simmons.

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.

ROOM IN THE INN MINISTRY, JANUARY 19

HCUCC will next host our yet to be housed neighbors January 19th, to keep them warm, give them a place to shower, and feed them hot meals. Can you help with this ministry? Check the signup sheets in the Gathering Room...there are many ways you can help to welcome our neighbors in need! Suzanne Lamorey, coordinator 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

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

WE EXPRESS OUR DEEP GRATITUDE TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CHANCEL CHOIR, MUSIC CO-OP AND HANDBELL CHOIR FOR THEIR GIFTS, TIME AND DEDICATION IN HELPING CREATE THIS SERVICE OF WORSHIP.

Choir Director: Bridget Green

Accompanists: Kathleen Smith, Adam Watkins, Jon Weddell

Chancel Choir: Lisa Cloninger, Cheri Dennis, Laura Hankins, Kathleen Smith, Joy Decker, Tina Dickens, Meg Houlihan, Beth Sharp, Sally Young, Jim Dwiggins, Henry Hankins, James Hong, Robert Shepherd

Music Co-op:

Brian Hankins, Mike Yonkovic, Ben Decker, Kevin Niblett

Handbell Choir: Dawn Robinson, lead; Joy Decker, Cheri Dennis, Autumn Holt, Tammie Holt, Phil Kaveler, Alice Phelan, Dawn Simmons, Micki Spear

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

Rev. Fred Robinson, Associate Pastor

Mrs. Dawn Simmons, Executive Assistant

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