



Unsplash Photo by Artem Beliaikin

“Peace comes within the souls of men [humanity] when they realize their oneness with the Universe, when they realize it is really everywhere, it is within each one of us.”

-Black Elk

“The world would be a paradise of peace and justice if global citizens shared a common definition of love which would guide our thoughts and actions.”

-Bell Hooks

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT ~ PEACE**

December 10, 2023, 10:55 am

** Your whole self is welcomed here. Please feel free to take care of your body during worship in ways that work for you.*

Prelude "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" J. Carraway

Chiming of the Hour

Special Music "Come On, Ring Those Bells" arr. K. Barker
Eric Miner, Ed Vickery, vocalists

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: May the peace of Christ be with you!

Many: **And also with you.**

Introit "Rise Up and Shine!" FOREST GREEN

**Rise up and shine! Your light has come; God's glory breaks like dawn.
For though the earth be cloaked in night and gloom shrouds everyone,
Yet over you the Lord will rise, with glory gleaming clear,
Till nations turn to seek your light and the whole world draws near.**

* Call to the Heart Kim Buch

Please take a comfortable posture that supports your worshiping, reading, and singing.

One: We gather this morning, feeling weary from our worries and scattered by the demands of this busy holiday season.

Many: **God, we look for signs of your peace and coming.**

One: In our community frustration still boils as we witness the lasting effects of racial divisions and disparities.

Many: **God, we look for signs of your peace and coming.**

One: The earth on which we reside cries out for justice from pollution, neglect, and the overconsumption of resources.

Many: **God, we look for signs of your peace and coming.**

One: The world is torn by war and civil unrest, people fighting one another as if there were not enough for all of us.

Many: **God, we look for signs of your peace and coming.**

One: As we worship, hear the vision of the prophet Isaiah. Hold in your heart the promises of God's love.

Many: **God, as we wait prepare us and show us the way. For peace is coming. Christ is coming.**

* Hymn

“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 and yet a king,
Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
By thine all-sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.

Advent Candle Lighting

Mike Yonkovic & Dana Endsley

Being of Ukrainian descent it’s only appropriate to have Mike and Dana light the candle of Peace. We all pray for the peace of Christ to come to Ukraine, the Middle East, our own beloved country, and all around the world!”

Today, we light the second Advent candle, the candle for peace...

Reader One: Because of war, because of violence in our communities, because there is still so much unrest in our hearts, we light a candle of peace...

Reader Two: Because hatred is still so strong, because so many swords have not yet been remade into ploughshares, we light a candle of peace...

(Light the second candle in your Advent wreath.)

Reader One: May the light from this candle overwhelm the world.

Reader Two: May the light from this candle say to all that God’s peace is coming. Coming on earth as it already is in heaven.

Reader One: Friends, be not afraid, God’s peace is at hand!

Many: **God is, even now, coming into the world!**

Song

TEMPLE OF PEACE

Peace dawns on a weary world

When eyes begin to see all people’s dignity.

Peace dawns on a weary world: the promised day of justice comes.

Daily Affirmation

Ourselves: “The peace of Christ resides in my heart.”

Neighbor: “The peace of Christ resides in your heart.”

World: “The peace of Christ resides in our heart.”

Stories for All People

Linda Heaslet

Anthem

“Song of the Baptist”

F. P. O’Brien

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Lord’s Prayer (*unison*)

Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

EMMANUEL

Emmanuel, Emmanuel, your name is called Emmanuel.

God with us, revealed in us, your name is called Emmanuel.

* Gospel Lesson

Mark 1:1-8 (CEB)

Pam Shimberg

Our Gospel lesson for today comes from Mark 1:1-8, where John the Baptist speaks of preparing the way for the one who will come after him...

The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, God’s Son, happened just as it was written about in the prophecy of Isaiah:

“Look, I am sending my messenger before you. He will prepare your way, a voice shouting in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight.”

John the Baptist was in the wilderness calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. Everyone in Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to the Jordan River and were being baptized by John as they confessed their sins. John wore clothes made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. He announced, “One stronger than I am is coming after me. I’m not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

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

Many: Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.

Hebrew Lesson Isaiah 40:1-11 (NRSV) Rev. Christopher Czarnecki
Our Hebrew lesson for today comes from Isaiah 40:1-11, where the prophet Isaiah speaks of the assurance of God's presence...

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

A voice says, 'Cry out!' And I said, 'What shall I cry?'

All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, 'Here is your God!'

See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

One: For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us,
 for the word of God within us.

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon "Never Fading, Never Failing" Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Invitation to Generosity

Kim Buch

Now is the time for our ministry of giving and sharing...

In this busy season, our most important preparations will happen in our hearts when we make a way for God to come into our lives, when we "prepare the way of the Lord." Amid our preparations, we bring gifts to share so that as God comes, God's love will shine brightly through the ministries of this church and through our own lives as well. Let us now share our gifts with God...

* Doxology

W  łobie le y

Glory be to the Creator, glory be to the Christ,
Glory be to the Spirit, our praise to you arise.
Here we offer to you gladly all the gifts that you impart,
As we glory in your presence, giving from a grateful heart.

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Kim Buch

Please join me in a unison prayer of dedication for all we have received...

Gracious God, we enter this season seeing your world filled with violence, division, and injustice. We hear your prophet Isaiah promising comfort, offering assurance. As we hear him, we are reminded we are called to prepare the way. To be the designers of peace, the builders of justice, and the producers of kindness. We pray that our giving will continue to point to the Christ who comes in love and compassion, who promises the kin-dom that is to reign in our world. For this we pray this in the peace that is Christ. Amen.

* Hymn 117

“Lift Up Your Heads”

TRURO

Lift up your heads, O mighty gates; behold the glorious Ruler waits!
The Sovereign One is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.

Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart
From earthly use for heaven’s employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart to you; here, Christ, abide!
Let me your inner presence feel; Your grace and love in me reveal.

So come, my Sovereign; enter in! Let new and nobler life begin;
Your Holy Spirit guide us on, until the glorious crown be won.

Poetry

“Prepare Your Way”
by Steve Garnass-Holmes

Alice Phelan-Young

Holy One,
prepare your way in me.
Give me faith, like the stable,
to know your presence within me.
Give me courage, like Mary,
to let your life overwhelm mine.
Give me strength, like Joseph,
to protect what is holy, tender and growing.
Give me patience, like the shepherds,
to be still and listen.
Give me humility, like the magi,
to kneel before your presence.
Give me trust, like the child,
to let myself be borne into a new world.
Give me joy, like the angels,
to bring good news to the poor.
Give me love, like the manger
to hold Christ within.
Holy One,
prepare your way in me.

* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response

KEEP YOUR LAMPS

**Keep your lamps trimmed and burning, (3x)
For the time is drawing nigh.**

Postlude

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

J. Purifoy

*Songs in this service are used by permission.
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Parts of the liturgy for today's service were written by Pastor Chris and adapted from Worship Ways, www.saltproject.org, Unfolding Light, and Life in Liturgy.

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

D Evans, Brian Hankins, Jo Ann Jellison, Deborah Winston, Laurence Winston, Shakti Subramanian

We welcome all in our congregation to participate! Do you like talking to interesting people and being helpful? **Greeters and ushers, liturgists and readers are needed** starting at 10:30 every Sunday. Please sign up in the Gathering Room or on the SignUpGenius link:



<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-ushers>

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

Stay connected! There are many new events in our future! Check out all the current happenings in the weekly newsletter via Constant Contact. *Not seeing it in your inbox? Sign-up here:* <https://holycovenantucc.org/newsletters/>

HOLIDAY LOVE OFFERING FOR OUR STAFF

During this joyful time of year, we ask you to consider contributing to a holiday love offering to be divided among our dedicated staff members who work hard to make Holy Covenant a place of welcome, warmth, & spiritual renewal. No gift is too small and all are appreciated. If you choose to give by **December 12**, offerings can be made to Martha Bomely with the following methods:

Zelle: Martha.bomely@gmail.com, 7048040640; **PayPal:** Martha.bomely@gmail.com; **Venmo:** @mbbomely; **Checks** should be payable to Martha Bomely.

ANGEL TREE GIVING

This Season, we are providing wrapped gifts for a family with 10 children. This family lost their father to gun violence. Thank you all who are sharing the love with this family. **Wrapped gifts are due today.** Questions? Contact Suzanne Lamorey, 704-654-7267 or slamorey@uncc.edu.

FOR OUR CHILDREN

The Christian Ed team has put together some packets for kids who find themselves in church for the whole hour and need some activity. The packets for our “regulars” will have their names on them. Packets for others will specify “non-reader” or “young reader”, based on instructions to be read in the latter. The packets will include crayons and will be at the usher station.

MASKS WELCOMED

According to Atrium Health, respiratory virus season is upon us. There are increasing levels of COVID, flu (influenza), RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), as well as colds and strep. It would be a kindness if those experiencing respiratory symptoms could stay home and not expose vulnerable folks at Holy Covenant. Also, on the subject of COVID, CDC has information and guidelines for those exposed but not yet having symptoms, as Laura Hankins and Jo Ann Jellison have recently noted and followed. Both tested and masked when in public and stayed away from church services for 10 days. It wasn't fun, but it was the best thing to do. Feel free to wear a mask to avoid exposure to colds and other respiratory viruses. Stay healthy and cozy this winter!

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Linda Clark and family in the recent death of her husband, Gary Clark.
Linda Carver, Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Tom & Kathy Habel, Jim Humphrey, Sharon Landis, Melissa Noll, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Jerry Rhyne, Ed & Beth Sharp, Cynthia & Tommy Simpson, Shakti Subramanian, Anita Taylor

Friends & Family Members

Karen & Billy (Kim Tyler), Melissa Brown, Craig Chrismon (Melissa Noll), Jim & Janet Chittick (Stephanie Herrin), Erika Eckel and family (Dawn Simmons), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Darin Jellison (Jo Ann Jellison), Matty & Simone McKinnon (Joy Decker), Roxanne & Moose Meyer (Dana Endsley & Mike Yonkovic), Sue Parrish (Terry Raley-Dennis), Marie Raley (Jean Raley-Dennis), Suzie & John Robinson (Dana Endsley & Mike Yonkovic), Barbara Rutelonis (Eric Miner), Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), Christopher Sizemore (Tina Ettesen), Eulene Shepherd (Robert Shepherd), Joyce Ward (Ed Vickery), Janet Wakefield (Linda Burby), Clifton & Gwendolyn Washington, Jr. (Deborah Winston), John Zastrow (Barb Schneller)

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to

prayers@holycovenantucc.org

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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On Sunday December 17th, you are invited to wear a Silly Sweater as we sing with joy during our worship service. This Sunday will be a fun and lighthearted service, so dig out those bright, beautiful, and colorfully decorated sweaters!



Season of Advent at Holy Covenant UCC

12/17—Joy
Music Sunday, Consistory

12/24—Love
11 am service

Chili Supper 5:30pm
Candlelight Worship 7pm service