

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Algona, Iowa
Third Sunday in Advent
December 15, 2019

PRELUDE

RINGING OF THE BELL

GREETINGS, GOOD NEWS, ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHTING THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE

***OPENING SONG:** "Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates" #176

SHARING JESUS' PEACE

CALL TO WORSHIP (read responsively)

One: Leave your exile behind; God is calling us home.

Many: We'll follow the Way through the desert.

One: Enter the desert without fear; God's water will quench our thirst.

Many: We'll walk the Highway of God's people.

One: Travel the Highway with joy; God is leading us to life in abundance.

Many: We'll rejoice and be strong for God is with us!

One: Come, let us worship!

OPENING PRAYER (read together)

We come today, God, echoing John the Baptist's question to your Beloved Child: "Are you the one who is to come?" Give us eyes to see and ears to hear the answer for ourselves: In the work of justice: Jesus! In the practice of mercy: Jesus! In good news for the poor: Jesus! In the vision of peace: Jesus! Make us ready, with open hearts and joyful spirits, to follow in his Way. Amen.

TIME FOR CHILDREN AND THE YOUNG AT HEART

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (read together)

This season is supposed to be so holy, God of Christmas, yet the din of sales pitches turns us into cynical grumps. As we drive down the streets, the decorations on all the houses keep us from seeing the loneliness of the widower, the strained faces of those who fear the future. We are so determined to find just the right gift or card which speaks of joy, we forget that you came so long ago to offer justice to those who have none. Be patient with us, God of our hearts, as we struggle to speak for the voiceless, to walk with those who have lost their way, to let go of our certainty of what really happened so long ago, and listen to the songs of children which speak of that peace which really can bring reconciliation, of that grace which really can offer hope, of that love which really came to us that night in Bethlehem, in the birth of Jesus, our Brother, our Savior. Amen.

A MOMENT FOR SILENT REFLECTION AND REPENTANCE

WORDS OF ASSURANCE (read responsively)

One: Do not be afraid, but believe. Our God is here, opening our eyes to see that salvation which is ours approaching us in this season of Advent.

Many: We join our voices in rejoicing in God who is our Savior. The One who calls us blessed, is the God who forgives us. Amen.

SECOND SCRIPTURE READING James 5:7-10

***MIDDLE SONG:** "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" #191

***AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (read together)

We are an Advent people, a people of hope. For us, Advent is a time of waiting, and so we wait. We wait for the coming of the One who is the fulfillment of God's promise, the fulfillment of hope, the declaration that we have been redeemed. Even so, we are not a naïve people. We know that the world in which we live will continue to be filled with pain and sorrow. We know that hatred and violence will continue to exist. We know that death and separation will continue to be a part of our lives. But because we are an Advent people, we know that none of these things will win in the end. The Holy One is coming, to make holy once again all that was, is, and ever will be. And in our waiting and our hoping, we work and worship, pray and play, in all things hoping that peace, love and joy will reign in our lives and in our world, now and forever. Amen.

GLORIA PATRI #734

FOCUS SCRIPTURE Luke 1:46b-55

read from the Common English Bible

MESSAGE: “Joy From the Very Depths”

Pastor Burtnett

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD’S PRAYER

OFFERING

***DOXOLOGY**

Words #44

***DEDICATION OF OFFERING**

***CLOSING SONG** “My Soul Proclaims with Wonder” #170 (sung to tune of All Glory, Laud and Honor” #265)

***BENEDICTION**

POSTLUDE

The Call to Worship (adapted), Call to Confession, Prayer of Confession, and Words of Assurance are from *Lectionary Liturgies* by Thom M. Shuman. The Opening Prayer and Offering Prayer of Dedication are from *Worship Ways-Worship Resources for the United Church of Christ*. The Affirmation of Faith is by Rev. Rebecca F. Harrison, Transitional Pastor, Spanish Springs Presbyterian Church, Sparks, NV.

=====

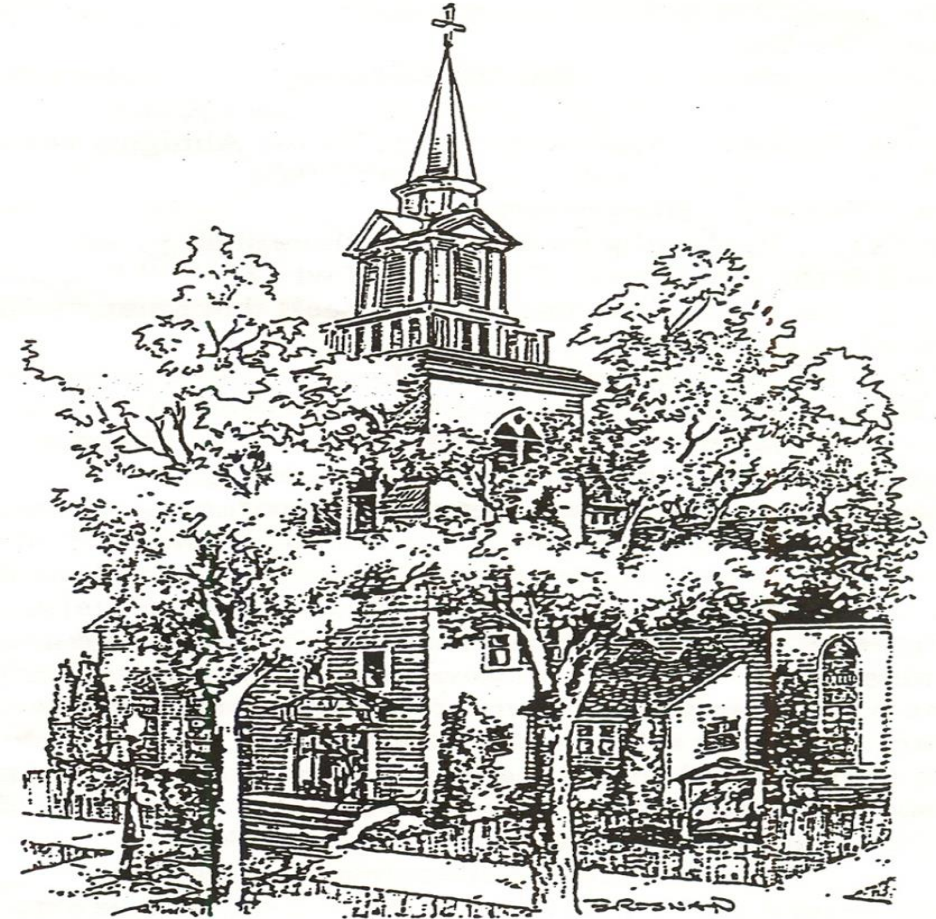
Organist: Liz Reynolds
Lector: David Burrow
Worship Leader: Pastor Burtnett

=====

December Radio Sponsor: Mick and Kris Schlievert

Birthdays:

**First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Algona, Iowa**



“Where No One Is A Stranger”

315 S. Moore Street – Algona, IA 50511

515-295-2845

JOY

Leader: Watch and wait for Christ's coming! Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer.

People: We light this candle in hope. (*light the first candle*)

We light this candle for peace. (*Light the second candle.*)

We light this candle in joy! (*Light the pink candle.*)

Leader: Rejoice! For our Lord is coming into the darkness of oppression's exile to lead us home, as we hear in Isaiah 35:1-10: The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Let us pray.

All: O Lord, our redeemer, you lead us from languishing in sorrow's shadows into laughter's joy over your abundant restoration. Thank you that you are coming for us to lead us home along your Way, Jesus Christ. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our Daily Bread for the next three months is in the Fellowship hall.

The mitten tree will be up for this month. Hats, scarves, mittens, etc. are welcome. Children's mittens should be waterproof.

Today is the last day of Sunday school until after the holidays. After church we gather for caroling and soup potluck.

The signup sheet for next year's radio sponsors is in the parlor.

Women's Fellowship will meet this Thursday at 1:30 pm.

The Christmas Eve service will begin at 5 pm.

Next Sunday we will be taking donations for the Christmas Fund Offering.