

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Algona, Iowa
Third Sunday of Advent
December 13, 2020

PRELUDE

RINGING OF THE BELL

GREETINGS, GOOD NEWS, ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE OF JOY

One: Holy One, we light this third candle, and delight in the sparkle of its outrageous reminder to “rejoice”! Let its flame cast light into shadowy places and show where work is to be done. Let a community of builders be formed in The Light of Joy. Let Joy find home in our hearts, and make space for your presence there, as we work for justice and peace in the service of Love.
People: God be with us in this Light of Joy. (*light your third Advent Candle*)

CALL TO WORSHIP

(read responsively)

One: Come! Rejoice in our God. Let’s give thanks, whatever life brings.

Many: May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

One: Let’s prepare our hearts and our world for the Prince of Peace, who is coming.

Many: May all who weep come home with shouts of joy.

One: Prepare the way of the Lord, and make straight the path of God’s arrival.

Many: In prayer, in song, in service, let’s prepare for the birth of love.

***OPENING SONG** “Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart”

#113

OPENING PRAYER

(read together)

Spirit of God, we give you thanks for drawing near, for touching the world in Jesus’ birth. Help us draw near to you, as we prepare our hearts and our world for the justice and peace you bring. Guide our preparations for Christmas, as we share the good news with those who suffer, and as we offer our friendship to those who are alone. Move within our hearts, as we make a way for your coming, by forgiving others as we have been forgiven. Come, Spirit of God; be born in us anew, that we may live in your mercy and your grace. Amen.

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(read together)

We try not to do any evil, Anointing God, but it is so hard to let go of those little things we enjoy - gossiping about the pregnant girl in the neighborhood; making light of the accomplishments of a co-worker; daydreaming about someone else’s partner. Forgive us, Loving God. You have freely given us salvation, yet we act as if we are the ones who paid for it. Help us to rejoice always in your grace, and to give thanks in every moment for that life we receive through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

SILENCE FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

(read responsively)

One: Go, and take God’s Good News to others: to those held captive by sin; to those cradling broken hearts; to those grieving lost relationships. God forgives us all and makes us new.
Many: Even as we rejoice in God’s mercy, we will tell everyone we meet, "God has done such wondrous things for us, and wants to do the same for you!" Thanks be to God! Amen.

FIRST SCRIPTURE READING John 1:6-8, 19-28

* AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

(read together)

We believe that God has come to us; that God brought us into being, that this God gave us breath and purpose, that we have been blessed to be a blessing to others, that we have fallen short of this commandment but that God has nevertheless loved us despite our brokenness. We believe that God is coming to us; that God is not happy to leave us alone, that this God will come to us as a particular human being, that God will be made known to us in flesh and bone like ours, that Mary will soon give birth and Joseph will soon clap his hands in joy, that Jesus Christ will be born and our salvation made complete. We believe that God will come to us; that God will have the final word and that Word will be good, that this God will give us the presence of the Spirit to continue our work, that we are called to be disciples to all the corners of the earth, that the day is coming when tears and pain will be no more, and all will gather at the Table to sing an endless and perfect “Alleluia!” Amen.

GLORIA PATRI

(music only, not sung)

FOCUS SCRIPTURE Psalm 126

read from the *Common English Bible*

MESSAGE: “Harvesting Joy”

Pastor Burtnett

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND LORD'S PRAYER

AFFIRMING OUR GIFTS

***DOXOLOGY** (music only, not sung) Words #44

*** PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (prayed together)

Faithful One, accept these gifts of our hearts and hands. May they be multiplied and magnified as the living presence of Christ in the world. Amen.

***CLOSING SONG** "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" #185

GOING FORTH WITH THE PEACE OF CHRIST

POSTLUDE

The Advent Candle Lighting liturgy and Offering Prayer of Dedication are from *Worship Ways-Worship Resources for the United Church of Christ*. The Call to Worship (adapted) and Opening Prayer are from *The Abingdon Worship Annual 2020* edited by Mary J. Scifres and B. J. Beu. The Call to Confession, Prayer of Confession and Words of Assurance are from *Lectionary Liturgies* by Thom M. Shuman. The Affirmation of Faith is *written by Rev. Stephen M. Fearing* www.stephenmfearing.com.

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

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December Radio Sponsor: Mick and Kris Schlievert

Birthdays:

You are invited to read the other two lectionary scriptures for today.

Isa 61:1-4,8-11 and 1Thess 5:16-24

The December through February Our Daily Bread booklets are in the Fellowship hall entry. Please call the office if you can't come to get one and the office will try to get one to you. Next Sunday we will be taking contributions for the Christmas Fund Offerings. The hat, mitten, etc. box is in the Fellowship hall entry. The items we receive will go to the Care Team at the end of the year.

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United Church of Christ
Algona, Iowa**



"Where No One Is A Stranger"

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