

FIRST (PARK) CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC

December 1, 2024

First Sunday of Advent

# hope



Order of Worship for December 1, 2024  
First Sunday of Advent ~ Communion Sunday

*Gathering, Centering, Announcements - 10:15am*

*Sanctuary Worship - 10:30am*

Gathering Music

String Quartet-in-Residence

*The First Noel*

*Carol of the Bells*

*I Saw Three Ships*

Arr. Michael Tyree

*The situation in our world is frightening, and many people experience deep anxieties. More than ever, we will be tested in our faith. I hope and pray that the Lord will deepen our faith during these weeks of Advent and will fill us with peace. Hope is not optimism, and I pray that we all will be able to live hopefully in the midst of our apocalyptic time.*

*Optimism is the expectation that things... will get better. Hope is the trust that God will fulfill God's promises to us in a way that leads us to true freedom. When I'm struggling to find hope I find it helpful to remember. To remember a time when God – the Holy One, Divine LOVE, Jesus, whatever your word for God is – restored my hope. Remembering what God has done in my story in the past helps me to remember what God will do in the future.*

~ Henri Nouwen

***What might God be inviting you to remember today?***

Welcome and Announcements

Rev. Darryl Kistler

A Moment for Santa Claus Girls

Rick Bartling

Blessing of the Children and Youth

Pastor Darryl

*As we watch for the dawn of a brighter day,  
A candle of hope lights the way.  
As we look for the signs of the promised birth,  
Of a Savior who brings heaven to earth.*

*Lord, we are waiting for peace to reign,  
Lord, we are listening for love's refrain.  
For hope, peace and joy and love to unite  
In the beauty and wonder of Advent's holy light.*

The Lighting of the Advent Candle

Jonathan Hodde, confirmand  
Dennis Baker, mentor

**One:** Our Advent journey begins today with the lighting of the first candle, the candle of Hope. Like the flame of a candle, may hope be ignited in our hearts, reminding us that brighter days are ahead.

**One:** For those of us facing difficult challenges

**All:** **Ignite our hearts with hope.**

**One:** For the end of wars wreaking havoc and pain in our world

**All:** **Ignite our hearts with hope.**

**One:** For safety for those fleeing the tyranny of oppression

**All:** **Ignite our hearts with hope.**

**One:** For the light of forgiveness to shine in our hearts

**All:** **Ignite our hearts with hope.**

**One:** Gracious Creator, in moments of uncertainty, we turn to you with hearts heavy but hopeful. Grant us the strength to navigate challenges, the wisdom to see possibilities, and the courage to embrace the journey ahead. May hope be our guiding light, leading us to a future filled with grace, love, and possibilities beyond our imagining. Amen.

Response

*Advent's Holy Light*  
(1st time: choir  
2nd time: congregation)

(on cue)

Lord, we are wait - ing for peace to reign.  
Lord, we are lis - tening for love's re - frain.  
For hope, peace, and joy and love to u -  
nite in the beau - ty and won - der of  
Ad - vent's ho - ly light.

The image shows five staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The melody is simple and suitable for congregational singing. The lyrics are written below each staff, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

*Children and youth may leave the sanctuary for the Children's Worship Center and Youth Group.*

+ Invocation

Reading in Unison  
Ken Haines, liturgist

**God of our Expectation, We praise you for surely-coming days of Shalom: love, peace, health, and well-being for the people who walked in darkness. We await with assurance the surely-coming days when AIDS is cured, when every weapon is beaten into tools for rebuilding, when every child has the opportunity to develop God-given gifts, and when every adult sees every child as a gift from God. We desire, O God of our Hope, surely-coming days when no city fears hurricanes, no country fears bombs, and no tribe fears annihilation by another. We thank you for the surely-coming days when no LGBTQ person or person of color fears for their safety because God chose to create all people in the diversity of God's image. We thank you for our hope and for your surely-coming days. Amen.**

Scripture Reading

Luke 21:25-36

Ken Haines, liturgist

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place and to stand before the Son of Man.”

**One:** The Word of God for the People of God...

**All:** Thanks be to God.

Solo

Riley Wells, mezzo-soprano

*O Thou That Tellest Good Tidings to Zion*

(from the oratorio MESSIAH)

G.F. Handel

Sermon

*The Signs of the Time*

Pastor Darryl

## Sacrament of Holy Communion

### *Invitation to the Table and Words of Institution*

#### *Serving of the Bread and Cup*

String Quartet in Residence  
*Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

#### Invitation to Generosity and Stewardship

Pastor Darryl

#### Offertory Music

The Chancel Choir  
String Quartet in Residence  
*Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*  
Setting by Dan Forrest

*(For text, see hymn no. 82)*

#### + Doxology

*Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow*  
Tune: OLD HUNDREDTH

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures high and low;  
Praise God in Jesus fully known:  
Creator, Word, and Spirit one. Amen.**

#### + Prayer of Dedication

Reading in Unison

**Holy God, we are busy with many preparations. We are preparing our homes, food, gifts. We are busy with things. And we confess that our busyness may be misplaced, that we spend more time preparing for things than preparing for You. Remind us that our hearts and souls have work to do, too. And through our gifts this day, enable us to let go of that which does not matter, and use these gifts for what does matter. Amen.**

+ Hymn - No. 136

*Go, Tell It on the Mountain*

Tune: GO TELL IT

+ Common Commission

Reading in Unison

**Let us now go forth into the world in peace; being of good courage;  
holding fast to that which is good; rendering to no one evil for evil;  
strengthening the faint hearted; supporting the weak; helping the af-  
flicted; honoring all people; loving and serving the Lord and rejoicing in  
the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Postlude

Steven B. Smith, organ  
*Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*  
Donald Hustad

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***String Quartet-in-Residence***

Christopher Martin, violin

Letitia Jap, violin

Leslie VanBecker, viola

Alicia Eppinga, cello

***Thank you for joining us this morning!***

We'd like to know that you were here, answer any questions you have, and support you in prayer. Please fill out the information card and place it in the offering plate.

Following Worship

P.O.P. Table: Pick up Advent devotionals and @home kit  
and fill out your "Hope" ornament.

Coffee Fellowship in Allinder Commons

***Joys and Concerns***

**Dear Park Church,**

Thank you for support, prayers, and well wishes during this difficult time. The cards and prayers are very much appreciated. Cindy and Kurt Myers

**From Dick Wooden**

Thank you for the cards and well wishes. They did me a world of good during my recuperation time. I am happy to be back in worship. Dick and Judy Wooden

**Keep Ken and Linda Larsen in your prayers.** Ken is at Blodgett hospital dealing with some medical issues but hopes to be home soon. Cards of encouragement and well wishes can be sent to 3751 Senna NE Rockford, MI 49341.

**Keep Margaret Bilsky and her family in your prayers.** Margaret has been placed in hospice care at Porter Hills. Cards may be sent to her at 3600 E. Fulton SE, AC209, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

**Please pray for those navigating illness/treatment including:** Ron Bickel, Jane Hackbardt, Kurt Myers, Liz Taylor, and Mike VanDuinen.

**Remember our young people away at college including:** Luke Barnum, Laura DeBoer, Mallory Hagemann, Lily Kugler, Jack O'Malley, and Drew Wolford.

**Remember those serving in the military including:** Jesse Campbell, Devon Goetz, Andy MacGregor, and Matthew Quick.

**Pastoral care is always available.** Contact Pastor Darryl at [dkistler@parkchurchgr.org](mailto:dkistler@parkchurchgr.org).



**Thank you to everyone** who shopped/ate their way through the Park Church Women's holiday bazaar and Martenson Ten pie sale last week! Together, we raised \$1401.83 which will be put to very good use in support of the Park Church Women's mission.

### ***Advent @ the P.O.P. Table***

Pick up your personal Advent Devotional each week. Read the selections throughout the week in preparation for each upcoming Advent service. Record a thought on the ornaments corresponding to each week. These ornaments will be added to trees in Thompson Chapel where you are encouraged to take a moment to reflect on the season after worship. Be sure to pick up your *Advent at Home* candle kit. (One kit per family; While supplies last.) *All Creation Waits* by Gayle Boss is available for \$5.00 today.

### **A Note from our Accessible to All (A2A) Team**

*We are publishing a series of articles about accessibility and how those dear to us have been impacted by our spaces. We are grateful to Judy Furman for sharing Peg Atkinson's story.*

Peg and Dick Atkinson and my husband Chuck and I met when we were all newcomers at Grand Valley State College (then) University (now). One summer, as Peg and Dick were driving home from a week spent volunteering at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, the car left the road and rolled over. The result was a spinal cord injury which left Peg paralyzed from the neck down. Five months of therapy at Mary Free Bed Hospital helped Peg regain the use of her right hand – she had always been left handed – so she could drive a power wheelchair.

For several years Peg had been an active, contributing member of the bell choir but was now unable to grasp the handles of the bells, or lift the heavy ones, in order to play them. The choir purchased a rack which looks like a cross between an old coat tree and a Charlie Brown Christmas Tree. By hanging bells on the “arms” of the rack and providing Peg a thick-handled mallet, she was able to strike the bells and continue to play in the ensemble. Being able to take part in Park's worship experience was wonderful for her. Although she continued to be wheelchair bound, the choir's move toward accessibility meant that they, too, retained a talented and valuable member.

*~ Judy Furman*

## **Meditating on Lesser Known Advent Scriptures December 1, 8, 15, and 22 at 9:30 in Thompson Chapel**

Rev. Tracey Taylor-Kunst will guide you through a variety of prayer and meditation practices in preparation for the season. This will be a time of entering less familiar Advent scriptures with both our left and right brains and trying out a variety of prayer/meditation practices.

This Advent season, Pastor Darryl is using the lectionary readings from the Gospel of Luke each week. In these pre-service Chapel meetings, Rev. Tracey Taylor-Kunst will facilitate readings of lesser known lectionary scriptures chosen for that Sunday, enriching your understanding of the season. If you couldn't make it today, please join us next week!

December 1: Psalm 25:1-10

December 8: Malachi 3:1-7

December 15: Ezra 1-6 / Zephaniah 3:14-20 (Worship Center style with Megan Cottrell)

December 22: Luke 1:39-55 Mary and Elizabeth

## **Candlelight Christmas: Shall I Rejoice? Sunday, December 8 at 4:30**

Join us for the 107th Annual Candlelight Christmas at 4:30pm on Sunday, December 8. The service will feature *Magnificat* by Taylor Scott Davis, an up-and-coming young composer from Texas. Davis writes primarily sacred music, composing often for Voces8, one of the world's most popular vocal ensembles and veterans of our GAV concert series. All of the Park Church music ensembles joined by our string and brass musicians-in-residence participate.

Pre-service music starts at 4:00pm. The public is warmly invited (there is no charge) and parking is free in our lot and on the surrounding streets while space is available. Please note: Due to a number of concurrent events in our immediate neighborhood, you may want to leave some extra time for parking. A freewill offering will be taken to benefit our Christmas Offering recipient, Undue Medical Debt. A cookie reception will follow.

## **Palmer School Night of Giving 2024**

**Thursday, December 12 at 3:30pm**

1:00 volunteers meet at Park to load or go directly to Palmer to help unload

1:15-3:30 Set up in the Palmer gym

3:30-5:30 Night of Giving distribution

We appreciate the tremendous support we are receiving from our congregation for Palmer School's Night of Giving. There are a few things still left on our wish list: Girls/ boys underwear & socks. (we have more girls underwear than boys) and gloves & mittens. Drop off donations in Martenson Parlor. We are also looking for a source for small bags of apples, potatoes, oranges. Please contact Sara Haines (616 560.4756) if you have any ideas or contacts.

## **Santa Claus Girls**

**Saturday, December 14**

Did you know that Santa Claus Girls was founded right here at Park Church in 1908? Let's honor that heritage and support the Santa Claus Girls of today!

**Be a driver** and deliver gift bags to the children's homes or **be a loader** and help fill up the delivery cars. **Be a loader** (adult must accompany those under 16 years old) and carry organized batches of gift bags to assigned vehicles. To volunteer, fill out the registration form at [www.santaclausgirls.org/volunteer](http://www.santaclausgirls.org/volunteer).

**Monetary donations are always welcome.** Santa Claus Girls is an entirely volunteer run organization. Donations enable the purchase of each year's gifts for the children and pay the occupancy expenses for the large warehouse and storage facilities necessary to operate efficiently and safely. [www.santaclausgirls.org/donate](http://www.santaclausgirls.org/donate).

## **Cookie Walk and BBQ Lunch**

**Sunday, December 15 after worship**

Allinder Ten will sponsor the annual Cookie Walk and BBQ Lunch on December 15 after worship. Cookies will be prepackaged in small assortments. (cash appreciated). You KNOW how talented the Park Church resident bakers are, so start saving those nickels and dimes and kick off your holiday celebrations with some delicious Christmas cookies.

**Christmas Offering 2024**  
**Undue Medical Debt**  
**December 1 - December 31**

*The Park Church Christmas Offering takes place every December and benefits one or more organizations selected by the Board of Deacons. You can make your donation by cash or check using the designated envelope in the bulletin or by using the QR code in the bulletin.*

**Dear Park Church Family and Friends**

We are thrilled to name Undue Medical Debt (<http://unduemedicaldebt.org>) as our 2025 Christmas Offering recipient. Undue Medical Debt is the leading 501(c)3 non-profit working to eliminate the medical debt of neighbors in our country. They have worked closely with many congregations in the United Church of Christ, including the congregation Pastor Darryl discussed in his “Forgive Us Our Debts” sermon during the Lord’s Prayer series this summer.

As of 2023, seven in ten adults in the United States say they received a medical bill they cannot afford. In Michigan alone, over 1.3 million households have medical debts in collections. The most likely cause of the debt is the inability to cover the cost of an unexpected medical event or accident. This happens to insured and uninsured people alike, though those living near or below the poverty line, single parent families, and people of color are disproportionately impacted. Carrying medical debt can have severe lasting consequences causing stress, anxiety, depression, straining relationships, garnished wages, and delaying other needed medical care.

By partnering with Undue Medical Debt, we hope to offer some of our neighbors a tremendous gift of love, joy, and peace through our Christmas Offering.

- For every \$1 donated, \$100 in medical debt will be erased. This is because Undue Medical Debt purchases the debt in large, bundled portfolios at pennies on the dollar.
- Our goal is \$15,000 so that we can eliminate \$1,500,000 in debt for our neighbors.
- We have asked Undue Medical Debt to allocate the money raised in our Christmas Offering to assist folks living with debt in West Michigan, prioritizing Kent, Ottawa, Ionia, and Muskegon Counties.
- The process is income-based. Undue Medical Debt uses data analytics to pinpoint the debts of those experiencing financial hardship. Relief cannot be requested, and recipients don't have to apply — they're simply notified of debt abolishment.

Like getting an unexpected gift from St. Nicholas himself, our neighbors in West Michigan get surprise letters that their debt has been erased! There is no application, tax consequences or penalties. Their debts are just gone, and the relief is joyous. We will hear testimonials throughout Advent about the deep and lasting impact this relief has had on people's lives, and we will be joined by a member of Undue Medical Debt's philanthropy team on Sunday, December 15. You are encouraged to support the 2024 Christmas Offering. Thank you for your tremendous generosity and care for our neighbors.



Access the online donor portal for the 2024 Christmas Offering by using the camera on your phone and clicking the link that appears.

## ***Serving With You Today***

Ushers: Paul Davison, captain; Colleen Czarnecki, Amy Rains, Doris Robey,  
Richard Rowe, Doug Rubingh

Communion Servers: Pastor Darryl, Patrick Coyle, Chris Krive, Sally Lundquist,  
Karen Kelly, Tom Zvirgzds, Rosanne Holton, Kathy Olsen,  
Gary Olsen, Kris Tuszynski

Parking Lot Greeter: Ben Lundquist

Greeters: Laura Barnum, Mark Barnum, Ellen Bristol

Carol Choir: Cheryl Wells

Chapel Choir: Heidi Hertel

Sound: Sam Johnson-Begay

Video: Bruce Robey

Flower Care: Marcia Streeter

## ***Serving With You December 8***

Ushers: Mike Mitchell, captain; Jan Edwards, Jeff Liggett, Janet Mitchell,  
Gary VanderHeiden, Bob Wolford

Parking Lot Greeter: Bill Streeter

Greeters: Katie Bradley, Lynda O'Malley, Chris O'Malley

Carol Choir: Cheryl Wells

Chapel Choir: Heidi Hertel

Sound: Sam Johnson-Begay

Video: Andrew DeBoer

Flower Care: Marcia Streeter

## **Coming up at Park Church**

- Tues. Dec. 3** at 12:15pm Music at Midday: Caledonia Choralaires  
at 6:30pm Board of Deacons meeting
- Wed. Dec. 4** at 7:00pm Bible Study Gospel of Matthew (Zoom link available)
- Thurs. Dec. 5** at 8:30am Men's Discussion Group  
at 6:15pm Smith-Dively Ringers rehearsal  
at 6:15pm Parkmeisters rehearsal  
at 7:30pm Chancel Choir rehearsal
- Sat. Dec. 7** at 8:00am Music Department rehearsals Candlelight
- Sun. Dec. 8** at 10:30am Sanctuary Worship - Second Sunday of Advent  
at 9:30 Carol Choir rehearsal in the Children's Worship Center  
at 9:30 Chapel Choir rehearsal in the 3rd floor youth choir room  
at 9:30 *Meditating on Lesser-Known Advent Scriptures* in Thompson Chapel  
Continental breakfast before worship/coffee fellowship after worship  
Confirmation Calls meets after worship  
Advent: Pick up devotionals and fill in ornaments  
at 4:30pm Candlelight Christmas Service: *Shall I Rejoice?*
- Tues. Dec. 10** at 6:30pm Board of Trustees meeting
- Wed. Dec. 11** at 10:00am Park Church Women board meeting  
at 7:00pm Bible Study Gospel of Matthew (Zoom link available)
- Thurs. Dec. 12** at 8:30am Men's Discussion Group  
at 3:00pm Palmer School Night of Giving  
at 6:15pm Smith-Dively Ringers rehearsal  
at 7:00pm West Michigan Survivors of Suicide Loss meeting  
at 7:30pm Chancel Choir rehearsal
- Sat. Dec. 14** at 8:00am Santa Claus Girls Delivery Day
- Sun. Dec. 15** at 10:30am Sanctuary Worship - Third Sunday of Advent  
at 9:30 Carol Choir rehearsal in the Children's Worship Center  
at 9:30 Chapel Choir rehearsal in the 3rd floor youth choir room  
at 9:30 *Meditating on Lesser-Known Advent Scriptures* in Thompson Chapel  
Continental breakfast before worship/coffee fellowship after worship  
Advent: Pick up devotionals and fill in ornaments

Degage Volunteer  
sign up





*We are an Open and Affirming Congregation*  
No matter who you are,  
or where you are on life's journey,  
you are welcome here.

Candlelight Christmas Service: Sunday, December 8 at 4:30pm

Santa Claus Girls Delivery Day, December 14 at 7:30am

Christmas Eve Early Service: Tuesday, December 24 at 4:30pm

Christmas Eve Festival Service: Tuesday, December 24 at 9:00pm

***Ministerial and Office Staff:***

Rev. Darryl Kistler, Senior Minister

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Access the online donor and payment portal by using the camera on your phone and clicking the link that appears.

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[www.parkchurchgr.org](http://www.parkchurchgr.org)

[www.facebook.com/parkchurchgr](https://www.facebook.com/parkchurchgr)

The wifi password is parkchurchguest.