

FIRST (PARK) CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC

December 15, 2024

Third Sunday of Advent

joy



Order of Worship for December 15, 2024

Third Sunday of Advent

Gathering, Centering, Announcements - 10:15am

Sanctuary Worship - 10:30am

Gathering Music

Phyllis Ann Miner, piano

No matter what troubles overwhelm us today, Isaiah reminds us that in all of our preparation and passionate pursuit of God's coming kingdom of joy, we must not forget that God's salvation has come and continues each day. "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). With joy you will remember that God's salvation is already present among us. Faced with daily troubles and suffering, we can choose to live in joyful presence to God and one another. Do not turn away from the pain and the hurt in our world or in our own lives, and do not stop rejoicing in God, who fills us to overflowing that God's love might flow through us and flood our troubled world with hope, peace, and joy. Today we will light a candle of joy as a sign of our commitment to be present to ourselves, our friends, our families, and our neighbors, that in our vulnerability we might share in the glorious joy of God's love and kindness together.

Welcome and Announcements

Rev. Darryl Kistler

Blessing of the Children and Youth

Pastor Darryl

The Invitation to Advent Worship

The Carol Choir
Ring and Celebrate!

Brad Nix

The Chapel Choir
While By My Sheep I Watched at Night
Arr. Hugo Jüngst

The Lighting of the Advent Candle

Sadie Crampton, confirmand
Lisa Doctor, mentor

One: Today the candle representing Joy joins the candles of Hope and Peace. As we light this third candle, let the joy of the season fill our hearts. May we find joy in

simple moments, and may that joy bring a sense of peace and well-being into our lives.

One: When we think of the countless blessings that fill our lives

All: Our hearts are filled with joy.

One: For the warmth of relationships and the bonds we share with family and friends

All: Our hearts are filled with joy.

One: When we pause to appreciate the beauty and wonder of nature

All: Our hearts are filled with joy.

One: For the giving and receiving of simple acts of kindness

All: Our hearts are filled with joy.

One: Gracious Creator, teach us to find joy not only in triumphs but also in the simple moments of everyday grace. Fill us with joy that surpasses circumstance, anchored in the unchanging truth of your love. Help us share this joy with others and may joy and laughter be a constant companion on our journey through life.

Amen.

Response

Advent's Holy Light

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 musical score is written on five staves in G major (one flat) and 3/4 time. It features a melody with lyrics underneath. The first line is marked 'p' (piano). The second line has a fermata over the final note. The third line has a fermata over the final note. The fourth line has a fermata over the final note. The fifth line has a fermata over the final note.

+ Invocation

Reading in Unison
Mike Hondorp, liturgist

Eternal Creator, walking with you fills each moment of life with wonder and surprise. We pray you will make us watchful as we await the coming of Christ. Grant that we may not be found sleeping and uncaring, but awake and rejoicing in your newness of life. Through the same Jesus Christ our Savior, Amen.

+ Hymn of Praise - No. 96

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry
Tune: WINCHESTER NEW

Christmas Offering Moment

Undue Medical Debt

Scripture Reading

Luke 3:7-18
Mike Hondorp, liturgist

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What, then, should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So with many other exhortations he proclaimed the good news to the people.

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

All: Thanks be to God.

*The angel Gabriel from Heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame.
"All hail" said he, "Thou lowly maiden Mary,"
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!*

*"For known a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honor thee,
Thy Son shall be Emanuel, by seers foretold,"
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!*

*Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
"To me be as it pleaseth God," she said,
"My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name."
Most highly favored lady. Gloria!*

*Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ was born
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say:
"Most highly favored lady," Gloria!*

Sermon: *Rejoice! God is Doing Something Great*

Pastor Darryl

Meditation

Steven B. Smith, organ
In Quiet Joy at Christmas ("In Dulci Jubilo")
Phil Lehenbauer

Prayers of the People and Our Savior's Prayer

Pastor Darryl

concluding, the congregation prays in unison:

...Our Father/Mother/God, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Prayer Response

The Chancel Choir
While We Are Waiting, Come
Tune: WAITING

*While we are waiting, come;
while we are waiting, come.
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel,
while we are waiting, come.*

Invitation to Generosity and Stewardship

Pastor Darryl

Offertory Music

The Chancel Choir
Rachel Mills, soprano
Shall I Rejoice?
Taylor Scott Davis

*Shall I rejoice for Christ in me,
The first of such to say?
All that this child shall ever say or be
Now lives and grows in me.
Shall I rejoice for Christ in me,
His name forever mine?
I yield to him my life's identity:
Christ lives and grows in me.
Shall I rejoice for Christ in me,
Both glory and disgrace?
My song shall be both joy and agony:
Christ lives and grows in me.
Shall I rejoice for Christ in me,
As clouds and shadows rise?
I ponder scenes that I don't want to see.
Christ lives and grows in me.*

+ 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

God of Advent joy, we bring our offerings with hearts open to your transformative call. In this season of anticipation, may our gifts help mend what is broken and share the promise of redemption. Empower us to live fully present, giving generously and acting justly. Let these offerings be seeds of hope and joy that will draw us closer to your kin-dom. Bless our giving, that it may reflect your love and bring light to our world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

(Based on Luke 3:7-18)

+ Hymn - No. 132

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

Tune: IN DULCI JUBILO

+ 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 afflicted; honoring all people; loving and serving the Lord and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Postlude

Steven B. Smith, organ
Fanfare on "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

Paul Fey

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 fill out your *Joy* ornament

Stop in Thompson Chapel and enjoy some quiet amongst the Advent Trees

Allinder Ten Cookie Walk and BBQ Lunch after worship in Merriam Hall

Cookie Walk and BBQ Lunch

TODAY after worship

Allinder Ten will sponsor the annual Cookie Walk and BBQ Lunch today after worship.

Cookies will be prepackaged in small assortments. The lunch is \$5.00; (If you are new or visiting, lunch is on Pastor Darryl.) You won't have to cook AND you can buy cookies!

Meditating on Lesser Known Advent Scriptures

December 22 at 9:30 in Thompson Chapel

Luke 1:39-55 Mary and Elizabeth

Rev. Tracey Taylor-Kunst guides you through prayer and meditation practices related to 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. If you couldn't make it today, please join us next week!

New Advent Paraments

This season, the new Advent paraments adorn the pulpit and lectern. The color of the Season of Advent is blue representing hope and anticipation in preparation for the birth of the Christ Child. Blue often is associated with the color of the pre-dawn sky signifying expectation and the coming light. The pulpit parament has a star on it to symbolize the star that guided the Magi to the Holy Family just as we are on a spiritual journey during this season. Thank you to the Parament Selection Team, the Board of Deacons, Park Church Women, and the Heritage Committee for their leadership and support.

Joys and Concerns

We share the sad news that Ken Larsen passed away on Saturday, November 30 at the age of 84. Services have taken place. Condolences can be sent to Linda and her family at 3751 Senna NE Rockford, MI 49341.

Tom Vandenberg's daughter and Jennifer Hagemann's sister, Amy (Vandenberg) Lomer passed away on December 9 at her home in the UK. Amy grew up at Park Church and is warmly remembered by many of her peers. Condolences for the family can be sent to Jennifer and Mark Hagemann at 289 Lloyd Ct. Middleville, MI 49333.

Keep Molly's Molhoek's mother, Mary Molhoek in your prayers. Mary has been diagnosed with a blood infection and her condition is steadily improving. You can send your get well wishes to the church office in care of Peter Smith...(or drop them off in his box.) 10 East Park Pl. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 40503.

Please pray for those navigating illness/treatment including: Ron Bickel, Margaret Bilsky, 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.

The Sanctuary Flowers

The flowers at the Pulpit

In honor of Bob and Pam Nichols on their birthdays.
Given by their children and grandchildren.

The flowers at the Lectern

In honor of Roger and Diane LaWarre's 60th Wedding Anniversary.

If you would like to dedicate Sanctuary flowers, email Marcia Streeter. mabiti1@gmail.com

Annual Cocoa and Piñata Party **Sunday, December 22 after morning worship**

The youth are hosting a church-wide celebration on December 22 following the morning worship service. Please plan to stay for some cocoa, fellowship...and to take a whack at a piñata. You can help out by donating CANDY! Leftover Halloween candy is just perfect and can be left in Peter's office anytime.

Coming up at Park Church

- Mon. Dec 16** at 9:00am Cooking at Park for Degage
- Tues. Dec. 17** at 11:30am Serving lunch at Degage
- Thurs. Dec. 19** at 6:30pm Smith-Dively Ringers rehearsal
at 7:30pm Chancel Choir rehearsal
- Fri. Dec. 20** at 9:00am Cooking at Park for Degage
- Sat. Dec. 21** at 7:30am Serving breakfast at Degage
- Sun. Dec. 22** at 10:30am Sanctuary Worship - Fourth 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
Pinatas and Cocoa party in Merriam Hall after worship
- Tues. Dec. 24** at 4:30pm Christmas Eve Family Service
at 9:00pm Christmas Eve Festival Service

December 25 - January 1: The church office will be open intermittently with staff available limited hours to process correspondence and year end giving. Please call ahead if you are stopping by. Voicemail/email is monitored 24/7 with priority given to pastoral care concerns.



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

Park Church Christmas Offering 2024

Undue Medical Debt

December 1 - December 31

The Christmas Offering takes place every December. 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. Please make checks out to “Park Church” and write “Christmas Offering” on the memo line.

We are thrilled to name Undue Medical Debt (<http://unduemedicaldebt.org>) as our 2024 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.

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.

- For every \$1 donated, \$100 in medical debt will be erased. 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. You are encouraged to support the 2024 Christmas Offering. Thank you for your tremendous generosity and care for our neighbors.



We are an Open and Affirming Congregation

No matter who you are,
or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.

Serving With You Today

Ushers: John Miller, captain; Jim Butler, Cindy Dexter, Kathy Miller, Susan Sochanek,
Harlan Wilson

Parking Lot Greeter: Tom Johnson

Greeters: Gary Olsen, Kathy Olsen, Gloria Eckert

Carol Choir: Cheryl Wells

Chapel Choir: Heidi Hertel

Sound: Sam Johnson-Begay

Video: Kevin Arnett

Flower Care: Marcia Streeter

Ministerial and Office Staff:

Rev. Darryl Kistler, Senior Minister

Rev. Dr. Patrick Coyle, Minister of Music

Peter Smith, Spiritual Formation & Education Minister

Terrie Hunter, Congregational Life Coordinator

Gene Gess, Finance Director

Camille DeBoer, Communications Coordinator

Tim Persenaire, Lead Custodian

Marty Butler, Parish Life Assistant

Phyllis Ann Miner, Events Coordinator

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The wifi password is parkchurchguest.



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