

FIRST (PARK) CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC

December 22, 2024

Fourth Sunday of Advent

**love**



# Order of Worship for December 22, 2024

## Fourth Sunday of Advent

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

*Sanctuary Worship - 10:30am*

Gathering Music

Phyllis Ann Miner and  
Caleb Wenzel, piano duo

*When the people were looking for deliverance, the prophet Micah declared, “But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah...from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient day.” (Micah 5:2). But what if Micah is also talking to us, proclaiming, “But you, O Park Church, from you shall come forth for me...” What? What is God be calling forth from us?*

*God invites us to receive the promise of God’s salvation and the sustenance of God’s mercy and grace, enabling us to live the promise as God-bearers to the world. As Christ was born in Bethlehem, so too we answer God’s invitation to have Christ born among us today and every day. On this fourth Sunday of Advent we light a candle of love as a sign of our commitment to live as people of God’s promise, a promise of flourishing for all people that springs forth from God’s love for all creation.*

Welcome and Announcements

Rev. Darryl Kistler

Blessing of the Children and Youth

Peter Smith

The Invitation to Advent Worship

The Chancel Choir  
*Advent’s Holy Light*  
Joel Raney

*As we watch for the dawn of a brighter day,  
A candle of love 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.*

One: Today the fourth candle, the candle of Love, joins the candles of Hope, Peace, and Joy. Like the combined glow of many candles, let this season remind us of the strength found in unity as we come together to love and uplift one another. Let the warmth of love illuminate the connections that bind us together and foster us in a deep sense of belonging.

One: Love creates the bonds that provide us with deep meaningful relationships.

**All: The greatest of all gifts is love.**

One: Love inspires random acts of kindness and generosity.

**All: The greatest of all gifts is love.**

One: Love causes us to only look for the best in others.

**All: The greatest of all gifts is love.**

One: Love allows us to be accepted for who we are, flaws and all.

**All: The greatest of all gifts is love.**

One: Gracious Creator, we gather in your presence today, hearts brimming with gratitude for the extraordinary gift of love you have bestowed upon us. May the celebration of love extend beyond our immediate circles, creating ripples of compassion and unity in the world. In recognizing the beauty of love, may we become vessels of your light, shining brightly for all to see. Amen.

Response

The Choir and Congregation

*Advent's Holy Light*

*(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.

+ Invocation

Reading in Unison  
 Sue King, liturgist

**God of the impossible and unlikely,  
 God of the unexpected and inconceivable,  
 you turn our conventional world upside down,  
 where the hungry are fed,  
 and arrogant rich are turned away.  
 Instill in us unthinkable marvels.  
 Make us expectant with wonder  
 through Jesus who became one of us. Amen.**

+ Hymn of Praise - No. 105

*People, Look East*  
 Tune: BESANÇON

Scripture Reading

Luke 1:26-38  
 Sue King, liturgist

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The woman's name was Mary. And the Angel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! God is with you." But Mary was much perplexed by the angel's words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the

Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will envelope you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

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

All: Thanks be to God.

*Anthem*

The Chancel Choir  
Phyllis Ann Miner; Caleb Wenzel, piano  
Steven B. Smith, organ  
*O Come, All Ye Faithful*  
Arr. Dan Forrest

*(For text, see hymn 133.)*

Sermon: *Mary, Woman of Courage*

Pastor Darryl

Meditation

Steven B. Smith, organ  
*Priere a Notre-Dame*  
Leon Boellmann

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  
Now the Heavens Start to Whisper  
Tune: JEFFERSON

*Now the heavens start to whisper,  
as the veil is growing thin.  
Earth from slumber wakes to listen  
to the stirring, faint within:  
seed of promise, deeply planted,  
child to spring from Jesse's stem!  
Like the soil beneath the frostline,  
hearts grow soft to welcome him.*

Invitation to Generosity and Stewardship

Pastor Darryl

Offertory Music

The Parkmeisters  
*The Hands That First Held Mary's Child*  
Thomas Troeger/Dan Forrest

*The hands that first held Mary's child were hard from working wood.  
From boards they sawed and planed and filed and splinters they withstood.  
This day they gripped no tool of steel, they drove no iron nail,  
But cradled from the head to heel our Lord, newborn and frail.*

*When Joseph marveled at the size of that small breathing frame,  
And gazed upon those bright new eyes and spoke the infant's name,  
The angel's words he once had dreamed poured down from heaven's height,  
And like the host of stars that beamed blessed earth with welcome light.*

*"This child shall be Emmanuel, not God upon the throne,  
But God with us, Emmanuel, as close as blood and bone."  
The tiny form in Joseph's palms confirmed what he had heard,  
And from his heart rose hymns and psalms for heaven's human word.*

*The tools that Joseph laid aside a mob would later lift  
And use with anger, fear, and pride to crucify God's gift.  
Let us, O Lord, not only hold the child who's born today,  
But charged with faith may we be bold to follow in His way.*

+ 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 grace and wonder, we offer these gifts in response to your call. As Mary responded with faith, we too say, “Here we are, let it be to us.” Use these offerings to further your purpose on earth. Empower us to be bearers of Christ’s presence, bringing hope and love to our community. May our giving reflect the promise of Emmanuel, God with us, and bring light and joy in this Advent season. Amen.**

+ Hymn - No. 113

*Angels We Have Heard on High*

Tune: GLORIA

+ 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

*People, Look East*

Steven Wentz

## ***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 *Love* ornament

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

Annual **Cocoa and Piñata Party** after worship in Merriam Hall

**Thank you to everyone who bought lunch and cookies** last week at the Allinder Ten Cookie Walk. You generously raised just over \$900.00 which will be given in support of the 2024 Park Church Christmas Offering

## **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.

- 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.

You are encouraged to support the 2024 Christmas Offering. Thank you for your tremendous generosity and care for our neighbors.



## ***Joys and Concerns***

### **My Park People,**

I am deeply grateful to you for the cards and other expressions of sympathy at the passing of my beloved Ken. He loved Park Church! *Linda Larsen and family.*

**Molly's Molhoek's mother, Mary Molhoek** continues her recovery from a blood infection. You can send 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](mailto:dkistler@parkchurchgr.org).

### ***The Sanctuary Flowers***

#### **The flowers at the Pulpit**

In memory of our parents

Robert and Elizabeth & David and Shirley

From Cheri and Scott Stanard.

#### **The flowers at the Lectern**

In honor of our grandchildren especially Edda on her 9th birthday.

Given by Jan and Wayne Edwards.

If you would like to dedicate Sanctuary flowers, email Marcia Streeter. [mabiti1@gmail.com](mailto:mabiti1@gmail.com)

## **Stars for Epiphany**

**Sundays, December 29 and January 5**

*Attention Star Seekers!* On December 29 and January 5, there will be 30 stars made out of dollar bills hidden in the common areas of the church on the main level and outside of the sanctuary. Those who seek will find them! (If you spot one, you get to keep it, but please leave the rest so others can have the joy of finding one as well.) Thank you to Jim McGlothin for making these stars with his origami skills!

## **Birthday Sunday**

**Sunday, January 12 after worship**

We have so much to celebrate and this week it will be our birthdays! Join us after worship in Merriam Hall where you will find 12 festive tables; one for each month of the year. There will be a celebration cake at each table. Please sit and enjoy a piece of cake with your fellow birthday month Park people.

If you would like to bake (or buy) a cake for this celebration, please let Terrie Hunter know. [thunter@parkchurchgr.org](mailto:thunter@parkchurchgr.org)

## **Days for Girls Afternoon Kit Creation Day**

**Thursday, January 16 from 2:00-4:00pm**

The January Days for Girls work session is in the afternoon. If you haven't been able to join us, but always wanted to give it a try, this is your chance. In fact, you could bring a friend or two to help. Our fearless leader, Christina, is unable to be with us in January so we are charging ahead on our own! Please bring your serger or regular sewing machine and join in the fun! No machine? No problem! This is so much to do! We will have ripping and ironing and marking and measuring...*OH MY!*

## **Comin' Right Up!**

Chancel Choir rehearsals resume on January 9 at 7:30pm.

Men's Group resumes meeting on January 16 at 8:30am.

Bible Study resumes on January 22 at 7:00pm.

Annual Budget Meeting is after worship on January 26.

## **Coming up at Park Church**

**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.

**Sun. Dec. 29** at 10:30am Sanctuary Worship  
Continental breakfast before worship/coffee fellowship after worship  
Star Seekers Epiphany Star Hunt

**Sun. Jan. 5** at 10:30am Sanctuary Worship - Communion Sunday  
*(please note: The table is open to all; we always offer gluten-free bread)*  
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  
Continental breakfast before worship/coffee fellowship after worship  
Star Seekers Epiphany Star Hunt  
Removing of the greens after worship

**Tues. Jan 7** at 6:30pm Board of Deacons meeting

**Wed. Jan. 8** at 10:00am Park Church Women board meeting

**Thur. Jan. 9** at 6:30pm Smith-Dively Ringers rehearsal  
at 7:00pm West Michigan Survivors of Suicide Loss meeting  
at 7:30pm Chancel Choir rehearsal

**Sun. Jan. 12** at 10:30am Sanctuary Worship - Birthday Sunday  
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  
Continental breakfast before worship/coffee fellowship after worship  
Confirmation Class meets  
Birthday Cake and coffee in Merriam Hall after worship



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



*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: Bob Nichols, captain; Brian Bradley, Jim McGlothlin, Nancy McGlothlin,  
Diane Sherlock, Dick Sherlock

Parking Lot Greeter: Michael Waite-Kress

Greeters: Kate and Mark Meengs

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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Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 9:00 - 3:00

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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.



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