

FIRST (PARK) CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC

December 8, 2024

Second Sunday of Advent

peace



Order of Worship for December 8, 2024

Second Sunday of Advent

Gathering, Centering, Announcements - 10:15am

Sanctuary Worship - 10:30am

Gathering Music

Phyllis Ann Miner, piano

God is the source of peace. This second week of Advent causes us to remember that we can experience a Christmas free from turmoil and chaos. Regardless of our circumstances or our situations, we are offered peace that passes understanding.

That first Christmas, God's gift was called the Prince of Peace. Even the angels cried out, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." They knew the gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love that Christmas held: the fullness of God wrapped in the tiny flesh of an infant.

We can have the fullness of peace in our hearts on Christmas day, and every day, because we are loved with a love that is unfathomable.

Peace-loving God, keep us in perfect peace as our mind is stayed on the truth of your powerful love. Help us to trust fully in you and rest in the peace that you offer. Amen.

Where might you find peace through trust this week?

Welcome and Announcements

Rev. Darryl Kistler

Blessing of the Children and Youth

Pastor Darryl

The Invitation to Advent Worship

The Chancel Choir
Advent's Holy Light

Joel Raney

(text continued...)

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

Caleb Kutsche, confirmand
Robert Edwards, mentor

One: We continue our Advent journey today with the lighting of the second candle, the candle of Peace. Let the gentle glow of these candles symbolize the tranquility we seek in our hearts and homes, fostering a sense of peace that transcends the chaos of this world

One: In a world filled with conflict and confrontations

All: We humbly seek the gift of peace.

One: For the storms that sometimes rage within us

All: We humbly seek the gift of peace.

One: As we rush and hurry our way through busy lives

All: We humbly seek the gift of peace.

One: And for those around us we know are carrying heavy burdens

All: We humbly seek the gift of peace.

One: Gracious Creator, in the quiet moments may we find solace in your presence, and in the noisy chaos of life may your peace prevail. Calm the storms that rage within and around us. May we be instruments of your peace, fostering understanding, compassion, and harmony in our hearts. 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.

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

+ Invocation

Reading in Unison
Carrie Corbin, liturgist

Compassionate God, greet us with your grace this day, for we need you. We cannot save ourselves. Though we may be frantic with activity, our efforts do not yield peace, peace as you can give. Today we would be quiet enough to hear your voice. Today we would be still enough to feel your touch. Help us to find that place where we can receive as well as give, wait as well as act, and listen as well as speak. Our whole world needs your peace. Let us come before you and learn your ways, laying down our weapons and feeding the hungry. Come to us now, through Jesus the Christ. Amen.

~Written by Ruth C. Duck in "Touch Holiness"

+ Hymn of Praise - No. 100

My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout
Tune: STAR OF COUNTY DOWN

Sacrament of Baptism

Lincoln Scott Farnham
child of Elizabeth and Kaleb Farnham

Calvin Patrick Myers
child of Hailey and Matthew Myers

Prayer for the Baptized

Reading in Unison

Gracious and loving God, we pray for the newly baptized, Calvin and Lincoln. They are children made in your image, and we offer our love and blessing to them. Grant them both strength for life's journey, the joy of faith, the freedom of love, and hope of new life. Let them know your abiding presence as they continue to grow and emerge into who you have called them both to be. In Christ Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Luke 3:1-6
Carrie Corbin, liturgist

In the fifteenth year of the rule of the emperor Tiberius—when Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea and Herod was ruler over Galilee, his brother Philip was ruler over Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was ruler over Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—God's word came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. John went throughout the region of the Jordan River, calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. This is just as it was written in the scroll of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

A voice crying out in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way for the Lord;
make his paths straight.
Every valley will be filled,
and every mountain and hill will be leveled.
The crooked will be made straight
and the rough places made smooth.
All humanity will see God's salvation."

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

All: Thanks be to God.

*Light of the world, you loose the bonds of night;
Once we walked in darkness; now bursts forth your light.
Christ, in your glory, come to light the way;
Teach us how to follow.*

*Light of our paths, you walk with us in strife.
Where conflict darkness, bring the dark of life.
Christ, in your mercy, come to show us love;
Teach us how to follow!*

*We must be your hands, lent to heal and bless,
We must be your light, rending wide the darkness.
Christ, in your image, we will greet the world;
This is how we follow.*

*Light of our days, we feel your dawning call;
Send us forth to serve and bring your light to all.
Christ, you have claimed us; you have made us one.
We will always follow!*

Sermon: "The Baptist Shouts Metanoia from the Jordan Shores!"

Pastor Darryl

Meditation

Steven B. Smith, organ
On Jordan's Bank the Baptist Cries
Mark Winchester

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
Prepare the Way, O Zion
Tune: BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN

*Prepare the way, O Zion,
your Christ is drawing near!
Let every hill and valley
a level way appear.
Greet One who comes in glory,
foretold in sacred story.
O blest is Christ who came
in God's most holy name.*

Invitation to Generosity and Stewardship

Pastor Darryl

Offertory Music

The Smith-Dively Ringers
Kurt Stroh, director
God Rest Ye Merry
Valerie W. Stephenson

+ 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

Loving God, in this Advent season, we bring our offerings with hearts open to your call. Just as John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus, may our gifts help prepare the way for your kingdom. Use these offerings to bring hope, justice, and transformation. Help us to look beyond the surface, to see your work in surprising places and people. Bless our giving, that it may shine with the presence of Emmanuel. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

(Based on Luke 3:1-6)

+ Hymn - No. 128

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Tune: W ŻŁOBIE LEŻY

+ 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

Veni Emmanuel

Phil Lehenbauer

**Candlelight Christmas: Shall I Rejoice?
Today at 4:30pm**

Join us for the 107th Annual Candlelight Christmas at 4:30pm today.

Pre-service music starts at 4:00pm. A freewill offering will be taken to benefit our Christmas Offering recipient, Undue Medical Debt. A cookie reception will follow.

NOTE: Due to a number of events in our immediate neighborhood, you should leave some extra time for parking. Our lot will be available for Candlelight guests only and First United Methodist Church has graciously offered us the use of their surface lots off of Barclay. Additional free parking may be available on the surrounding streets. Paid parking includes the Public Library lot and the Community College Ransom Street ramp.

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, @home kit and fill out your *Peace* ornament.

Coffee Fellowship in Allinder Commons

Confirmation Class meets

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.

Joys and Concerns

We share the sad news that Ken Larsen passed away on Saturday, November 30 at the age of 84. Services will be held at Park Church on Friday, December 13 at 11:00am. Visitation is at 9:00am. A luncheon will follow. Condolences can be sent to Linda and her family at 3751 Senna NE Rockford, MI 49341.

Dear Park Church, I have truly appreciated your many expressions of care and concern during my spinal surgery and continued recovery. I feel very blessed to have such a supportive church family! Gina Vander Heiden

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

Meditating on Lesser Known Advent Scriptures December 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 15: Ezra 1-6 / Zephaniah 3:14-20 (Worship Center style with Megan Cottrell)

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

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

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Drop-in work sessions are open to anyone who can join us.

We will put you to work!

Tuesday, December 10 from 10:00-4:00

Wednesday, December 11 from 10:00-4:00

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.

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.

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. The lunch is \$5.00; (If you are new or visiting, lunch is on Pastor Darryl.) 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.

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.

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. Please make checks out to “Park Church” and write “Christmas Offering” on the memo line.

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.

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

Serving With You Today

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. 10** from 10:00-4:00 Night of Giving drop-in work session
at 6:30pm Board of Trustees meeting
- Wed. Dec. 11** from 10:00-4:00 Night of Giving drop-in work session
at 10:00am Park Church Women board meeting
at 7:00pm Bible Study Gospel of Matthew
- Thurs. Dec. 12** at 8:30am Men's Discussion Group
from 1:00pm - 5:30pm Palmer School Night of Giving
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
Allinder Ten Cookie Walk and BBQ Lunch after worship in Merriam Hall
- 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

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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Rev. Dr. Patrick Coyle, Minister of Music

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Phyllis Ann Miner, Events Coordinator

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

office@parkchurchgr.org

www.parkchurchgr.org

www.facebook.com/parkchurchgr

The wifi password is parkchurchguest.