

First (Park) Congregational Church

Sunday, December 14, 2025

The Third Sunday of Advent: **Joy**



Welcome to First (Park) Congregational Church!

We pray this worship service will be a blessing to you. While at Park Church if you need directions to the rest rooms, classrooms, fellowship spaces, or you need any help at all, please speak to a greeter or usher and we will do our best to assist you. The Sanctuary and Merriam Hall are equipped with the Loop System and other hearing-assist devices are available from an usher. The wifi password is parkchurchguest.

Our Congregational Commitments:

Vision Statement

...to build a community of relentless compassion and courageous hope, where all are seen and known, and the God of extravagant Love is revealed.

Inclusion Statement

As Jesus demonstrated by his life and teachings, we fully welcome into the life of Park Church and value all people regardless of beliefs or doubts, age, race, ethnicity, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical, intellectual or emotional ability, or economic status. Park Church is a place where all are welcome and equal. We value and celebrate the rich diversity of all God's creation. *(adopted 2015, updated 2020 and 2025)*

Safe Church Statement

Park Church is a designated Safe Church of the United Church of Christ. Park Church is committed to create a safe environment for all members, attendees, and visitors, especially children and youth, and to address any concerns about abuse, harassment or misconduct.

Accessible to All (A2A) Statement

Park Church welcomes people of all abilities and disabilities into the full life of the congregation. Called to participate in Christ's ministry, we pledge to continue expanding our views and attitudes as we evolve to meet the needs of our church and community.

In this way, Park Church is fully committed to being *Accessible to All*. *(adopted 2025)*

The bulletin cover art: *Awake My Soul*, Mike Moyers, 2013 (used with permission)



Click the QR code for the current Congregationalist.

Order of Worship for December 14, 2025

Gathering and Centering 10:20am

Announcements and Sanctuary Worship 10:30am

The + symbol indicates standing in body or in spirit.

Words in **bold type** are spoken or sung in unison.

Gathering Music

Phyllis Ann Miner, piano

Welcome

Rev. Darryl Kistler

Ringing of the Chimes

Prelude

Steven B. Smith, organ

In Quiet Joy at Christmas

Phil Lehenbauer

+ Prayer of Invocation

Reading Responsively

Rev. Jan Thorsen, liturgist

One: God of Joy,

We rejoice in the reality of who you are.

All: **We live within the joy of your love for us.**

Our contentment comes and goes.

Our happiness ebbs and flows.

Our feelings depend upon our circumstances,

our physical health, our brain chemistry.

But our joy is deeply rooted in our identity as your beloved children.

And we give you thanks. Amen.

+ Hymn of Praise - No. 362 (see bulletin page 8)

Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

Tune: LANGLOFFAN

Advent Theme

The Chancel Choir

When God is a Child

Arr. Patrick Coyle

Lighting of the Advent Candle of Peace

Grace Chandler and Chase Swidorski

We first lit the candle of Hope, and then the candle of Peace. Today, we light the third candle of Advent, the candle of Joy.

Our joy is grounded in faith that God is ever with us – that God is Emmanuel. And more than that: that in Jesus, God came to live with us. To know what it means to be human: to love and to be lost, to laugh and cry, to feel overwhelming joy and unbearable pain. In Christ, God knows what it was to be one of us.

Jesus had a deep understanding that the source of our joy is in the promise that God is ever with us. Jesus said to his disciples: “Truly, truly, I say to you, you have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.”

We add our prayer of Advent Joy with that of the great poet of the Hebrew Bible, found in Psalm 126,

One: When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

All: Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

Advent Response

When God is a Child

Brian Wren, Joan Collier Fogg, arr. Patrick Coyle

3. Joy is a song that wel - comes the dawn,
5 tell - ing the world that the Sav - ior is born. When
9 God is a child there's joy in our song. The
13 last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, and
17 none shall be a - fraid.

The musical score is written in 3/4 time on a single treble clef staff. It consists of five lines of music. The first line starts with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). The second line starts with a treble clef. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). The third line starts with a treble clef. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). The fourth line starts with a treble clef. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). The fifth line starts with a treble clef. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). The score ends with a double bar line.

Prayers of the People and Our Savior's Prayer

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.

Advent Prayer Response

The Chancel Choir

Prepare!

Joseph M. Martin

*Prepare ye the way of the Lord!
Make straight in the desert a highway for our King.
Come greet the Messiah; raise your voice and sing.
Prepare ye the way of the Lord!*

Scripture Reading

Matthew 1:18-25

Rev. Jan Thorsen, liturgist

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

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

All: Thanks be to God.

Meditation

Jubiloso! Handbell Ensemble
Kurt Stroh, director
O Come, O Come Emmanuel
Arr. Joel Raney/Arnold Sherman

Sermon: *A Blue-ish Hue of Joy*

Pastor Darryl

Meditation

Steven B. Smith, organ
Veni Emmanuel
John A. Behnke

Invitation to Generosity and Stewardship

Offertory Music

The Chancel Choir
Noël Nouvelet
(*Christmas Comes Anew*)
Arr. Mark Riese

Sing we noel!

*Christmas comes anew, noel, noel we sing.
As we humbly honor Christ the newborn king.
Sing we noel, for Christ the newborn king, noel.
Christmas comes anew, noel, noel we sing.*

*Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.
Devotes gens rendons à Dieu merci.
Chantons Noël pour le roi nouvelet, Noël
Noël nouvelet, chantons Noël*

*Christmas comes anew, noel, noel we sing.
As we humbly honor Christ the newborn king.
Sing we noel, for Christ the newborn king, noel.
Christmas comes anew, noel, noel we sing.*

+ 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 Responsively

One: Gracious God of deep joy, even when storms rage and doubts rise, you call us to see with a larger vision —

All: — to look for healing, hope, and signs of your grace breaking in. In this Advent season of both expectation and weariness, we bring these gifts as expressions of joy, rooted in trust, not in comfort. May our giving testify to your good news: that the blind still see, the lame still walk, and the poor still receive care. Use these offerings and us as signs of your coming reign, lights in the storm, and carriers of joy. In the name of Jesus, our hope and our Redeemer. Amen.

(Based on Matthew 11)

+ Hymn - No. 107 (see bulletin page 9)

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

TUNE: REJOICE, REJOICE

+ 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

Celebration! (quoting “Rejoice Greatly” from Messiah)

Stephen H. Best

Christmas Worship Service Schedule

Candlelight Christmas Service: Sunday, December 14 at 4:30pm
(free parking is available in our lot, on the surrounding streets,
at the First UMC lot on Barclay, and in the Masonic Center garage at 233 Fulton.)

Children’s Christmas Pageant: Sunday, December 21 at 10:30am
Christmas Eve Meditative Service: Wednesday, December 24 at 4:00pm
Christmas Eve Festival Service: Wednesday, December 24 at 9:00pm

362 Rejoice! Rejoice, Believers

1 Re - joice! Re - joice, be - liev - ers, and let your lights ap - pear;
 2 See that your lamps are burn - ing; re - plen-ish them with oil;
 3 Our hope and ex - pec - ta - tion, O Je - sus, now ap - pear;

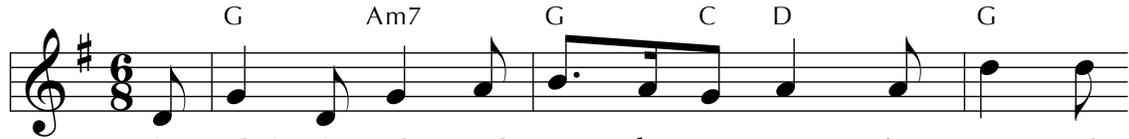
the eve - ning is ad - vanc - ing and dark - er night is near.
 look now for your sal - va - tion, the end of sin and toil.
 a - rise, thou Sun so longed for, a - bove this shad - owed sphere!

The Bride - groom is a - ris - ing and soon he will draw nigh.
 The mar - riage feast is wait - ing; the gates wide o - pen stand;
 With hearts and hands up - lift - ed, we plead, O Lord, to see

Up, watch with ex - pec - ta - tion; at mid - night comes the cry.
 a - rise, O heirs of glo - ry; the Bride - groom is at hand!
 the day of earth's re - demp - tion, and ev - er be with thee!

The Latin original of this text based on the parable of the wise and foolish maidens (Matthew 25:1-13) consisted of ten stanzas, but this briefer version is more appropriate for its message of urgency. It is set to a spirited minor Welsh tune named for a Pembrokeshire village.

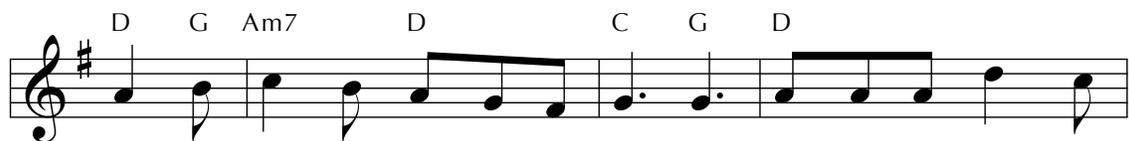
107 Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn



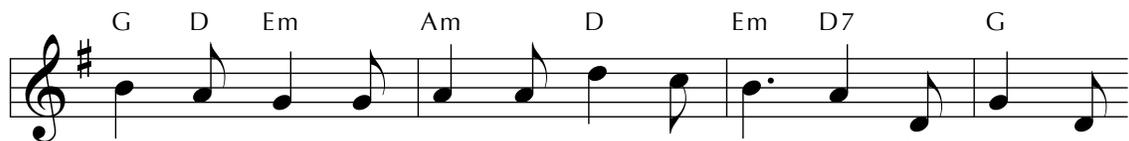
1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for an - gels
 2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em - man - u -
 3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when all the
 4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night. Though dark the



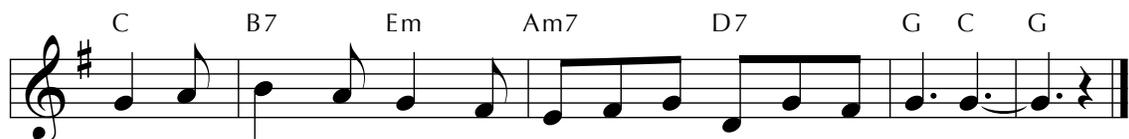
her - ald its dawn - ing. Sing out your joy, for soon he is
 el comes a - sing - ing; his hum - ble song is qui - et and
 world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so qui - et and
 win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall crown you with



born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing. Come as a ba - by
 near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing; mu - sic to heal the
 free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing. Then shall the mute break
 light; be strong and lov - ing and fear - less. Love be our song and



weak and poor, to bring all hearts to - geth - er, he o - pens
 bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing - kind - ness. The thun - der
 forth in song, the lame shall leap in won - der, the weak be
 love our prayer and love our end - less sto - ry; may God fill



wide the heaven - ly door and lives now in - side us for - ev - er.
 of his an - thems rolls to shat - ter all ha - tred and vio - lence.
 raised a - bove the strong, and weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.
 ev - ery day we share and bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

After attending a carol concert, the author and composer of this hymn was moved to create a contemporary, accessible carol that drew on the familiar images in a new way. There are echoes here of passages such as Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 7:14/Matthew 1:23, Isaiah 35:5-6, Isaiah 2:4.

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 in the pew rack and place it in the offering plate.

Following Worship

Coffee Fellowship in Merriam Hall

Drop off cookies for the Candlelight Service Reception

Drop off socks to stuff our Christmas Offering stockings

Pick up your copy of the Park Church Advent Devotional for this week

Serving With You Today

Greeters: Lynda and Chris O'Malley

Ushers: Jan Edwards, Jeff Liggett, Jim McGlothlin, Nancy McGlothlin, Gary VanderHeiden, Bob Wolford

Audio/Video: Sam Begay-Johnson, Andrew DeBoer, Camille DeBoer

Christmas Offering

Community and Service Center

ongoing through December 31

We are thrilled this year to name the Community and Service Center as our 2025 Christmas Offering Recipient. The Community and Service Center is a collaborative ministry of Dégagé, Mel Trotter, and seven downtown churches (including Park Church!). It is a weekday center established for Heartside neighbors to gather for warmth, rest and a meal. It is a service center connecting clients with essential services like securing safe housing, medical referrals, and employment. The Community and Service Center is located at Westminster Presbyterian Church where it will operate M-F from 8:00-3:00 through to March 31, 2026.

Our Christmas Offering is part of a coordinated effort to expand the Community and Service Center to a year-round program in a permanent home with professional staffing. You can make your contribution by clicking on the QR code or by using one of the designated envelopes in the Narthex.

PLEASE NOTE!: One of the immediate needs for the Community and Service Center guests is socks: Warm, dry...NEW socks for men and women! Let's fill the stockings in Allinder Commons with new socks in adult sizes and make the winter months just a little bit easier for our neighbors.



Joys and Concerns

Ron Bickel passed away on Tuesday, December 9 at the age of 86 following a brief hospitalization. Ron and his wife Gail have been members of Park Church since 1963. Ron served on the board of Deacons, helped plan gatherings and events at the church, and conveyed hospitality to thousands, including many of you, over the 50 years he served as an usher. The visitation, service, and reception will take place at Ofield Funeral Home (4500 Kalamazoo Ave. SE). The service will be on Monday, December 15 at 2:00pm. A reception will follow. The visitation will be on Sunday, December 14 from 1:00-3:00pm. Condolences may be sent to Gail Bickel, 3072 Bonita Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508.

Tom Vandenberg passed away on Saturday, December 6 at the age of 83. Tom has been a member of Park Church since 1966. Tom served as an usher for many years. He was devoted to his granddaughters Mallory and Avery and enjoyed reminiscing with visitors. Tom will be missed by all who knew him including his dear friend and carnation caller Lynne Mannard. Services are planned for later date and will be announced. Condolences can be sent to his daughter Jennifer's family. Jennifer and Mark Hagemann and Mallory and Avery at 289 Lloyd Court, Middleville, MI, 49333-8117.

Keep Dave and Mary Tulos in your prayers. Dave has been admitted to a rehabilitation facility for support and evaluation. Send him some good cheer and encouragement to brighten his day. 730 Forest Hill Ave. SE, Apt 217, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

Please pray for those navigating illness/treatment including: Ruth McCarty

Military Personnel: Jesse Campbell, Devon Goetz & Andy MacGregor, and Matthew Quick.

Pastoral care is always available. Contact Pastor Darryl at dkistler@parkchurchgr.org.

It's time again to order Christmas poinsettias!

You may place your order by calling the church office (459-3203), by emailing mbutler@parkchurchgr.org, or use an order form found in the Narthex. The cost is \$8.00 each. Please note if the plant is in memory or in honor of your loved one. Poinsettias may be taken home after the Dec. 21 service or after either of the Christmas Eve services. The order deadline is Dec. 16.

Annual Cocoa and Piñata Party

Sunday, December 21 after morning worship

The youth are hosting a church-wide celebration on December 21 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.

This Week at Park Church

- Mon. Dec. 15 at 9:00am Cooking at Park for Degage
at 7:00pm *All is Calm, All is Bright* Advent devotional discussion group
- Tues. Dec. 16 at 11:30pm Serve lunch at Degage
- Thurs. Dec. 18 at 6:30pm Jubilosos! rehearsal
at 7:30pm Chancel Choir rehearsal
- Fri. Dec. 19 at 9:00am Cooking at Park for Degage
- Sat. Dec. 20 at 7:30am Serving breakfast at Degage

Sun. Dec 21 at 10:30am Sanctuary Worship - Fourth Sunday of Advent and Children's Pageant
Coffee Fellowship before and after worship in Merriam Hall
Piñata and Hot Chocolate in Merriam Hall
Pick up your copy of the Park Church Advent Devotional for the week



Click the QR code to sign up for Degage cooking and serving.

Ministerial and Office Staff:

Rev. Darryl Kistler, Senior Minister

dkistler@parkchurchgr.org

Rev. Dr. Patrick Coyle, Minister of Music

pcoyles@parkchurchgr.org

Peter Smith, Spiritual Formation & Education Minister

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Terrie Hunter, Congregational Life Coordinator

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Julie Anderson, Finance Director

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Camille DeBoer, Communications Coordinator

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Tim Persenaire, Lead Custodian

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Marty Butler, Parish Life Assistant

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Judi Stroh, Office Administrator & Event Coordinator

jstroh@parkchurchgr.org

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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.