**St. John United Church of Christ**

***“In Christ We Live, Celebrate, & Serve”***

December 13, 2020 Third Sunday of Advent

9:30 a.m. Worship (618) 877-6060

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WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

HAND BELLS CALLING TO WORSHIP

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE

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 Introduction and Reading of Scripture from John 15:9-11

 Lighting of the Candle

 Song: ***“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”*** vs. 2

***O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here;***

***Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death’s dark shadows put to flight.***

***Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!***

 Unison Prayer

***O Holy One as Christmas draws near, there is a sense of excitement in the air. We can feel a joy in our lives and see it in those around us. still, for some of us this is a sad time because of unhappy things that have happened in our lives. Help us to have the joy that does not depend on earthly happiness but on you. Help us to be filled with your joy so that we may share it with a joyless world. Amen.***

PRELUDE *There’s a Song in the Air* Harrington

CALL TO WORSHIP AND PRAYER

In this season we hear voices calling us to prepare for the One who is coming.

***We decorate and plan, with mistletoe and presents on our mind, preparing love for all.***

We again await the light of Christ coming into the world.

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***Our homes shine out a welcoming lovelight for those near and far.***

The Spirit of the Lord is upon us, as we offer good news and praise the Lord. Let us pray together.

***Praise be to you, O God of righteousness, and Light of the world. This day we proclaim your comfort to a hurting world, and also your challenge to a selfish world. Fill our hearts and hands with your compassion, as we dream of, and work for, your peace in our home on earth and forever, through Christ the Messiah. Amen.***

PIANO RESPONSE *“I’ll Be Home for Christmas”*

RESPONSIVE PSALTER READING OF FORGIVENESS Psalm 126

 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,

 we were like those who dream.

 ***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 them.”

 ***The Lord has done great things for us,***

 ***and we rejoiced.***

 Restore our fortunes, O Lord,

 like the watercourses in the Negeb.

 ***May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.***

 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,

 shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

HYMN ***“Joy to the World”*** Verses 2, 3 & 4

***Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns; let all their songs employ; while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains***

***repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,***

***repeat, repeat the sounding joy.***

***No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground;***

***he comes to make his blessings flow***

***far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,***

***far as, far as the curse is found.***

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***He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove***

***the glories of his righteousness,***

***and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,***

***and wonders, wonders of his love.***

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

SOLO  *The First Noel* Varner

GOSPEL READING John 1:6-8, 19-28

SONGS AND MEDITATIONS

 ***God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen***

 ***God rest you merry, gentlemen, Let nothing you dismay,***

 ***Remember Christ our Saviour Was born on Christmas Day,***

 ***To save us all from Satan’s pow’r When we were gone astray.***

 ***O- tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,***

 ***O- tidings of comfort and joy.***

 ***Carol at the Manger***

***He Is Born***

***Away in a Manger*** *with Cradle Song Tune*

 ***Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,***

 ***the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;***

 ***the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,***

 ***the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.***

 ***The Friendly Beasts***

***Christmas Bell Carol***

***I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*** *Verses 1, 3 & 4*

 ***I heard the bells on Christmas day***

 ***Their old familiar carols play,***

 ***And wild and sweet the words repeat***

 ***Of peace on earth, good will to men.***

 ***And in despair I bow’d my head:***

 ***“There is no peace on earth,” I said,***

 ***“For hate is strong, and mocks the song***

 ***Of peace on earth, good will to men.”***

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 ***Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:***

 ***“God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;***

 ***The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,***

 ***With peace on earth, good will to men.”***

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE, LORD’S PRAYER

 ***Our Father, 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.***

A CHANCEL CHOIR FAVORITE *“The Little Drummer Boy”*

 Piano Duet—Karla and Ritch

STEWARDSHIP INVITATION & BLESSING

 ***Your messengers come in many forms, O God—often unexpected and humble—yet of great value. Bless our offerings to be messengers of your hope and peace, wherever there is longing. Amen.***

HYMN ***“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”*** *with**Hyferdol Tune*

***Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee. Israel’s strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;***

***dear Desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.***

***Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king,***

***born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring. By thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone;***

***by thine all sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.***

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Angels from the Realms of Glory* Smart

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As John the Baptist bore witness to Jesus, may our actions and words proclaim that he is the Light of the world. Welcome to worship!

The bulletins are given in loving memory of the December 11th birthday of **Leon Stromlund** by Trish Stromlund.

A donation in lieu of altar flowers today has been given by Hilde Few in memory of her loving husband, **Daryl,** and sons **Lamar** and **George**.

If you would like to place flowers in the background of Zoom worship, and pick them up Monday, please call Sharon O’Toole at 314-420-1548.

In December we are collecting the **Veterans of the Cross-Christmas Fund** special offering, layette items for **Church Women United**, and Misison of the Month gifts for **Kindercottage**. Please clearly mark any financial donations so the counters can properly credit them.

In preparation for **next Sunday’s** Zoom worship service, please have your favorite, or an especially meaningful, **Bible** at your home worship space to refer to during the Reflection time.

﻿**TODAY** is the last day to order gift cards through the **scrip** program in 2020.  If you want to place an order, please call Betty Meszaros at 618-451-1968 **TODAY**.  Betty will contact you when the shipment arrives (hopefully by December 20th) to arrange delivery.  Taking a break in January so this is a good time to stock up on cards for your personal use or to have on hand for last-minute gifts.  Cards do not have expiration dates.  Much appreciation to members, families and friends who have supported this project.

**OUR PRAYERS**

**Nursing and Assisted Living**

Loretta Cook, JoAnn King, Karen Luddeke, Shirley Thompson, Mary Lee Krohne, and Richard & Ruth Buer.

**At Home**

Ritch Alexander, Isabella Boyer, Marlene Brokaw, Myra Cook, Mary Franz, Diane Gerdt, Norman Hente, Olen Hermes, Bill McAmish, Billie Meyer, Cliff Robertson, Valara Schorfheide, Merle Rose, June Stille, and Don Young.

**Illinois South Conference**

O’Fallon UCC, Rev. Dr. Martha Thierheimer, Ohlman St. Paul’s UCC, Rev. Dr. Steve (Debbi) Nance; Retired Pastor Linda and Bob Coulson.

**SCRIPTURE READINGS (next page)**

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**Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11**

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
    because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
    to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
    and release to the prisoners;
**2**to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor,
    and the day of vengeance of our God;
    to comfort all who mourn;
**3**to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
    to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
    the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
    the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
**4**They shall build up the ancient ruins,
    they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
    the devastations of many generations…..

**8**For I the Lord love justice,
    I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
    and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
**9**Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
    and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
    that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.
**10**I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
    my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
    he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
    and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
**11**For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
    and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
    to spring up before all the nations.

**John 1:6-8, 19-28**

**6**There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7**He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. **8**He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light…..

**19**This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” **20**He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” **21**And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” **22**Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” **23**He said,

“I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’”

as the prophet Isaiah said.

**24**Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. **25**They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” **26**John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, **27**the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” **28**This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.