**St. John United Church of Christ**

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

December 20, 2020 Fourth 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 1 John 4:9-11

Lighting of the Candle

Song: ***“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”*** vs. 3

***O come, thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things, far and nigh;***

***to us the path of knowledge show, and cause us in her ways to go.***

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

Unison Prayer

***O God, we thank you that Jesus showed your love for every person—babies and children, old and young, sick people and those who were strong, rich people and those who were poor. Come to us in this Advent season, and give us love in our hearts for all people. Amen.***

PRELUDE *O Little Town of Bethlehem* Redner

CALL TO WORSHIP AND PRAYERFrom *Once in Royal David’s City*

“Once in royal David’s city stood a lowly cattle shed,

where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed:

***Mary was that mother mild,***

***Jesus Christ her little child.***

He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all,

and his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall:

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***With the poor and meek and lowly,***

***lived on earth, our Savior holy.”***

Once again, we prepare our humble hearts to welcome baby Jesus,

***Once again, we await the gift of Emmanuel.***

Let us pray:

***We worship you, O God, amazed that you come into the world to be One with us. Without what we see as kingly fanfare or authoritarian power, you come to us. Yet your Son is Lord over all, and Savior of the world. Inspire us to be your servants in these days, so we might fully honor him forever. Amen.***

HYMN ***“The King of Glory Comes”*** Refrain, Verse 1, Refrain

***The King of glory comes, the nation rejoices.***

***Open the gates before him, lift up your voices.***

***Who is the King of glory: what shall we call him?***

***He is Emmanuel, the promised of ages.***

***The King of glory comes, the nation rejoices.***

***Open the gates before him, lift up your voices.***

INTRODUCTION AND FIRST GOSPEL READING Luke 1:5-25

SOLO  *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* Varner

SECOND GOSPEL READING Luke 1:26-38

HYMN ***“Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”*** Verses 1 & 2

***Lo, how a Rose e’er blooming from tender stem hath sprung, of Jesse’s lineage coming as saints of old have sung.***

***It came, a floweret bright, amid the cold of winter,***

***when half-spent was the night.***

***Isaiah ‘twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind;***

***with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.***

***To show God’s love aright she bore to us a Savior,***

***when half-spent was the night.***

THIRD GOSPEL READING Luke1:39-55

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HYMN ***“Mary, Did You Know?”***

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***Mary, did you know that your baby boy would someday walk on water?***

***Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?***

***Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?***

***This child that you delivered, will soon deliver you.***

***Mary did you know that your baby boy would give sight to a blind man?***

***Mary, did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with his hand?***

***Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?***

***When you kissed your little baby, then you kissed the face of God.***

***The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again; the lame will leap, the dumb will speak the praises of the Lamb.***

***Mary, did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?***

***Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations?***

***Did you know that your baby boy was heaven’s perfect Lamb?***

***This sleeping child you’re holding is the great “I AM!”***

FOURTH GOSPEL READING Luke 1:57-80

BIBLE DEDICATION WITH LUKE 2:1-20

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.***

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***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.***

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 ***“It Came upon the Midnight Clear”***

***It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold;***

***“Peace on the earth, goodwill to all, from heaven’s all gracious King”:***

***the world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.***

***Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled,***

***and still their heavenly music floats o’er all the weary world; above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hovering wing, and ever o’er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.***

***For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old, when, with the ever-circling years, shall come the time foretold,***

***when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,***

***and all the world give back the song which now the angels sing.***

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Angels We Have Heard on High* French

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With Mary we sing: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” (Luke 1:46-47) Welcome to worship!

The bulletins are given in loving memory of our parents **Clyde and Dorothy Totten** by Steve and Robin Totten.

The centerpiece on the piano is given in loving memory of her mother, **Ethel Holtzscher**, on her birthday, December 18th, by Sandy and Jack Dawson.

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.

On **Christmas Eve**, this Thursday, we will offer a Zoom worship service, using the same id and password as this morning, at 3:00 p.m. So, you may come into the Zoom service like on Sunday morning. We also plan to record this service and have it posted through our web page (stjohnuccgranitecity.com) and Facebook page, and emailed, so you can watch it at a different time. This service will include the traditional candlelight closing with ***Silent Night***, so please have a candle ready to light at home. If you want one from church, call the office to set a time to come pick one up or to have it delivered. Blessings and joy will be shared as we celebrate the birth of the Christ child long ago, and forever.

Also, on Christmas Eve there will be a lovely **luminary lit manger scene** on our front church steps. Please enter our main parking lot entrance, drive-by the front of the church, and leave by the cemetery exit, between 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. May the beauty bring joy and peace as we celebrate the Light of the World shining among us in these days.

If you ordered a **poinsettia** and would like to pick it up after the Zoom Christmas Eve service, or any day after, call Karla & Charles at 618-219-2669 or 618-979-3425 to set a time to meet at church. The office will be closed on Friday, but by calling ahead you can get your poinsettia.

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.

Please remember that donations to be credited to the year **2020** should be given to the Office by Thursday, December 31. There is a mail slot in the office outside entrance door to use if no one is in the office.

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On December 31 we say farewell to our front office secretary, **Katie Jones,** as she has decided to be at home to care for her special needs son. We appreciate her dedication and skills shared with us, which have helped us in many ways, but especially with technology and equipment. She will be on-call when we need some assistance in the future. After Council is re-organized, the Personnel and Pastoral

Relations Committee will begin seeking a new secretary. Until someone is chosen, volunteers and Pastor Karla will cover the front office duties. **Diane Gerdt** will continue as our Financial Secretary on Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:30-2:30.

**OUR PRAYERS**

**Nursing and Assisted Living**

Rose Marie Bauer, 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, Randy Fischer, Mary Franz, Diane Gerdt, Norman Hente, Olen Hermes, Bill McAmish, Billie Meyer, Cliff Robertson, Valara Schorfheide, Merle Rose, June Stille, and Don Young.

**Hospitalized**

Bonnie Fornaszewski, Room 2351-2

OSF Medical Center

530 NE Glen Oak Ave.

Peoria, IL 61637

**Illinois South Conference**

Okawville St. Paul UCC, Okawville St. Peter’s UCC, Rev. Jeffrey (Sara) Schwab; Retired Pastor Rev. Bill and Patti Causer.

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

**Luke 1:5-2:20**

**5In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. 6Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. 7But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.**

**8Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, 9he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. 10Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. 11Then there**

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**appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. 13But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. 14You will have joy and gladness, and many**

**will rejoice at his birth, 15for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. 16He will turn many**

**of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” 18Zechariah said to the angel, “How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years.” 19The angel replied, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. 20But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur.”**

**21Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. 22When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. 23When his time of service was ended, he went to his home.**

**24After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, 25“This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people.”**

**26In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 28And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” 29But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32He**

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**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. 33He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” 34Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” 35The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the**

**Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36And 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. 37For nothing will be impossible with God.” 38Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.**

**39In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”**

**46And Mary said,**

**“My soul magnifies the Lord,  
47    and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
48for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.  
    Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
49for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
    and holy is his name.  
50His mercy is for those who fear him  
    from generation to generation.  
51He has shown strength with his arm;  
    he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
52He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
    and lifted up the lowly;  
53he has filled the hungry with good things,  
    and sent the rich away empty.  
54He has helped his servant Israel,**

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**in remembrance of his mercy,  
55according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
    to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”**

**57Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. 58Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.**

**59On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. 60But his mother said, “No; he is to be called John.” 61They said to her,**

**“None of your relatives has this name.” 62Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. 63He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And all of them were amazed. 64Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. 65Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. 66All who heard them pondered them and said, “What then will this child become?” For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.**

**67Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:**

**68“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
  for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.  
69He has raised up a mighty saviorfor us  
    in the house of his servant David,  
70as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from old  
71that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand**

**of all who hate us.  
72Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,  
    and has remembered his holy covenant,  
73the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us**

**74that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,  
 might serve him without fear,**

**75in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.  
76And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;  
    for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,  
77to give knowledge of salvation to his people  
    by the forgiveness of their sins.**

**78By the tender mercy of our God,**

**the dawn from on high will break upon us,**

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**79to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow**

**of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”**

**80The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.**

**2 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2This was the first**

**registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3All went to their own towns to be registered. 4Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.**

**8In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” 13And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,**

**14“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
    and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”**

**15When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” 16So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.**