**St. John United Church of Christ**

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

December 6, 2020 Second 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 Isaiah 9

 Lighting of the Candle

 Song: ***“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”*** vs. 4

***O come, Desire of nations bind all peoples in one heart and mind;***

***bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven’s peace.***

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

 Unison Prayer

***Eternal God, we thank you that through all the years you have given peace to your people. Help us to have your peace in our lives. We pray that, in this Advent season, we may, by what we do, show your presence to the sick, to the hungry, and to the lonely, so that they too may have peace. Amen.***

PRELUDE *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks* Bock

CALL TO WORSHIP AND PRAYER OF CONFESSION

 From *“On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry”*

On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry announces that the Lord is nigh:

***Awake and listen for he brings glad tidings of the King of kings.***

Let every heart be cleansed from sin, make straight the way for God within,

***And so prepare to be the home where such a mighty guest may come.***

For you are our salvation, Lord, our refuge and our great reward;

***Without your grace we waste away like flowers that wither and decay.***

Let us pray together.

***You desire healing and offer forgiveness, O Lord, yet at times we do not respond. We are unwilling to leave our present ways and go to new ways. We are unwilling to hear a new message that challenges our old expectations. As we confess our sins and seek to be restored, help us respond to your healing and receive your mercy. Grant us your peace, we pray. Amen.***

RESPONSIVE PSALTER READING OF FORGIVENESS

 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

 Lord, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

 ***You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin…***

 Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.

 ***Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.***

 Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

 ***Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.***

 The Lord will give what is good and our land will yield its increase.

 ***Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.***

HYMN ***“Comfort, Comfort Now My People”***

***“Comfort, comfort now my people; tell of peace!” So says our God.***

***Comfort those who sit in darkness mourning under sorrow’s load.***

***To God’s people now proclaim that God’s pardon waits for them!***

***Tell them that their war is over; God will reign in peace forever!***

***For the herald’s voice is crying in the desert far and near, calling us to true repentance since the Kingdom now is here. Oh, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way!***

***Let the valleys rise to meet him, and the hills bow down to greet him!***

***Straight shall be what long was crooked, and the rougher places plain!***

***Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits his holy reign! For the glory of the Lord now on earth is shed abroad,***

***and all flesh shall see the token that God’s word is never broken.***

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING Isaiah 40:1-11

SOLO  *Veni Emmanuel* Lasky

GOSPEL READING Mark 1:1-8

MEDITATION

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE, LORD’S PRAYER & RESPONSE

 ***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.***

INSTALLATION OF 2021 ALTAR GUILD AND COUNCIL MEMBERS

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.***

INVITATION TO COMMUNE, AS INSPIRED BY THE SPIRIT

This is the second Sunday in Advent, the time of preparing for the coming of Christ our Savior. Advent is a time to wait, to wonder what is yet to come.

***Today we have lit the second Advent candle as a sign that we wait with peace—we wait with longing for comfort, we wait for Christ to be born anew, we wait for a message of mercy. We wait in the light of steadfast love and faithfulness; we wait in Advent peace.***

Yet while we wait, we do not sit idly by. We prepare. We open ourselves to the peace that comes from knowing our hearts are made ready. In this Holy Sacrament, we receive spiritual strength to follow the path before us.

 ***O come, O come, Emmanuel, come to us we pray. Amen.***

COMMUNION PRAYER

BLESSING AND PARTAKING

UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

 ***In this humble yet holy meal, we have met you, Most Powerful One. And now, we pray that you grant us comfort in our wilderness, as we wait for the day yet to come, assured of peace and righteousness in your Kingdom. Thank you, Holy One. Amen.***

HYMN ***“Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates”***

***Lift up your heads, O mighty gates: behold, the King of glory waits!***

***The King of kings is drawing near, the Savior of the world is here.***

***Fling wide the portals of your heart: make it a temple set apart***

***from earthly use for heaven’s employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.***

***Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart to you: here, Lord, abide!***

***Let me your inner presence feel: your grace and love in me reveal.***

***So come, my Sovereign, enter in! Let new and nobler life begin!***

***Your Holy Spirit guide us on, until the glorious crown be won.***

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Gigue on “In Dulci Jubilo”*  Lasky

“Stir up your might, and come to save us!” prayed the psalmist (Psalm 80:2). Welcome to worship in Advent, as we await our Savior.

The bulletins are given in celebration of the December 4th birthday of my daughter, **Sarah**, and in loving memory of the December 8th birthday of my mother, **Dorthea Kirksey**, by Denise McGee.

The altar vases are given in memory of Leon's 81st birthday on December 11.  Love, Trish

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 Mission of the Month gifts for **Kindercottage**. Please clearly mark any financial donations so the counters can properly credit them.

Council will meet on Zoom on Thursday, December 10, at 6:00 p.m.

﻿Although in-person Sunday morning worship services are being placed on hold, the scrip program will continue. Orders will be submitted to the scrip company TODAY and 13th. Not a problem if you do not have an order form as you can just list the cards you are purchasing. Please include your check payable to St. John UCC with your order. You can mail your order and check to the church or drop it off through the mail slot at the office. I will go to the office two or more times each week to pick up orders. Another option is to mail your order to my house (2317 Cleveland Blvd., Granite City 62040) or call me 618 451-1968. **Date change**: Last day to order for delivery before Christmas is TODAY.  Orders will still be submitted on December 13th, but remembering difficulties with UPS delivery last year, suggestion is to order early. Arrangements will be made for delivery of gift cards after shipment is received at church. Thank you for your support. If you have already ordered, I will be contacting you personally to arrange delivery.

Betty Meszaros

The December/January Herald was delivered last week. Please add to the memorial page—a donation for two new trees for the front of the church in **Emily**’s memory, always remembering special joyful Christmases together, by Dave and Veronica Douglas.

**OUR PRAYERS**

We extend our Christian sympathy to the family of M. Jean Parks who died on Wednesday, November 25, 2020. A funeral service was held on Wednesday, December 2, at Lake View Funeral Home. May the peace and comfort that comes from God sustain her loved ones during this time of grief.

**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**

New Baden St. John UCC, Rev. Stephen (Molly) Stark; New Hanover Zoar UCC, Rev. R. J. (Lisa) Morgan; Retired Pastor Rev. Dr. Sheldon Culver.

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

**Isaiah 40:1-11**

Comfort, O comfort my people,
    says your God.
2Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
    and cry to her
that she has served her term,
    that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the Lord’s hand
    double for all her sins.

3A voice cries out:
“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
    make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
4Every valley shall be lifted up,
    and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
    and the rough places a plain.
5Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
    and all people shall see it together,
    for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

6A voice says, “Cry out!”
    And I said, “What shall I cry?”
All people are grass,
    their constancy is like the flower of the field.
7The grass withers, the flower fades,
    when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
    surely the people are grass.
8The grass withers, the flower fades;
    but the word of our God will stand forever.
9Get you up to a high mountain,
    O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
    O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
    lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
    “Here is your God!”
10See, the Lord God comes with might,
    and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
    and his recompense before him.
11He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
    he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
    and gently lead the mother sheep.

**Mark 1:1-8**

**1**The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

**2**As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
    who will prepare your way;
**3**the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
    ‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
    make his paths straight,’”

**4**John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **5**And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. **6**Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. **7**He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. **8**I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”