



Welcome!

First Congregational Church
of Webster Groves

United Church of Christ

Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

December 20, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Advent



We respond to God's call by welcoming everyone regardless of ability, age, ethnicity, race, gender identity, sexual orientation or socio-economic background.

To proclaim in word and deed the love of Christ, we affirm that all may share in the full life, ministry, fellowship, responsibilities and blessing of our congregation.

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Order of Worship
YOUNG PEOPLE LEAD WORSHIP

PRELUDE *Wie Schön Leuchtet (How Brightly Shines)* D. Buxthehude

WELCOME Phil Shoulberg

TOLLING THE BELL AND LIGHTING THE ALTAR CANDLES

RAISING THE COVENANT *Covenant of 1977*

**We who are called of God into this Christian community covenant together:
to seek to know the will of God, to experience the joy and struggle of
discipleship, to proclaim in word and deed the love of Christ, and to work for
peace and justice among all people. We trust God's promise of grace and
forgiveness and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our trials and rejoicing.**

AT THE ADVENT WREATH Beatrice Byrne

Scripture Reading Luke 1:46b-55 New Revised Standard Version

My soul magnifies my God,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
for God has looked with favor on the lowliness of this servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for
the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is God's name.
Divine mercy is for those who fear God
from generation to generation.
God's arm is strong
and has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
God has brought down the powerful from their thrones and
lifted up the lowly;
the hungry are filled with good things, and
the rich are sent away empty.
God has helped Servant Israel, remembering
divine mercy,
according to the promise made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and Sarah and their descendants forever. Amen.

Responsive Reading (One; Many) Kelsey Tolson and Gwen Denoon

Into our tumultuous times, the Love of God breaks in,
Into our fearful times, the glory of God is revealed.
Sometimes it announces itself.
Other times we must look high and low.
Sometimes we recognize it.
Other times we walk right past it, lost in ourselves.
Love is in need of willing hearts.
Love is in need of the smallest opening.
Greetings, favored ones! God's Love is with you.
Here? Now? How can that be?

Be not afraid. With God, nothing is impossible.

Love is knocking at the door.

Be not afraid. The Mighty One will do great things.

Who can say what awesome thing God is up to now?

Arise and shine, beloved ones. God's Love wants to be born in you.

Here we are, servants of God. Let it be so.

The candle of Love is lighted.

ALL: FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS, MAY YOUR LOVE BE BORN IN US.

HYMN

Canticle of the Turning

Rory Cooney

My soul cries out with a joyful shout
That the God of my heart is great,
And my spirit sings of the wondrous things
That you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,
And my weakness you did not spurn,
So from east to west shall my name be blest.
Could the world be about to turn?
My heart shall sing of the day you bring, Let
the fire of your justice burn!
Wipe away all tears till the dawn draws near,
For the world is about to turn.

Though the nations rage from age to age We
remember who holds us fast.
God's mercy must deliver us
From the conqueror's crushing grasp. This
saving word that our forebears heard Is the
promise which holds us bound,
Till the spear and rod can be crushed by God
Who is turning this world around!
My heart shall sing of the day you bring, Let
the fire of your justice burn!
Wipe away all tears till the dawn draws near,
For the world is about to turn.

THE WORD SHARED

Romans 16:25-27

Merrimon Boyd, *Student Pastor*

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ; according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to the Gentiles; according to the command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith — to the only wise God through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever: Amen!

Response

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the people.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL

Away in a Manger

Traditional

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
Beside me forever and love me always.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care.
And fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

BENEDICTION

Merry Christmas

Paris and Alex White-Lenard; Lauren, Laine, and Leo Gomez;
Cheyenne and C.J. Carter; and Henry and Nolan Breitenbach

POSTLUDE

Vom himmel hoch (From Heaven on High)

J. G. Walther

DISMISSAL

Phil Shoulberg







“For Such a Time as This.”

Esther 4:14

Each year, the Pension Boards receives many notes and letters of thanks from recipients of assistance made possible by your gifts to the Christmas Fund.

These letters come from both retired and active UCC pastors or their surviving spouses. Here are excerpts from just two of the letters received by the Pension Boards letting us know what a difference your generosity has made in their lives and the lives of their families. Here are excerpts from two notes received last year:

“My/our gratitude goes beyond words! With this gift I was able to pay the outstanding propane bill and have the propane tank refilled. It was depleted to 10% of capacity, and we have been having some very cold nights this winter. My husband's illness has precluded him from doing any work for the last 6 months, and we have fallen way behind in our living expenses...”

“My church, although solvent, was unable to give me a raise this year and is experiencing a shortfall in pledges. Thank you again for your faithful and compassionate gift which has enabled us to keep warm!”

“This note is a heartfelt thank you for the very generous emergency grant that the Board provided us to help offset costs associated with my kidney transplant and follow-up medical procedures and appointments. Not surprisingly, our family prayed a lot in the months leading up to my transplant in great anticipation of what was coming, and in the time since, having received the gift of a ‘second chance’ at life...”

“We are grateful for modern medicine, excellent medical providers, and the support of our local and wider church families and friends, including the United Church of Christ Pension Boards...”

“We never lost faith, trusting in Christ's promise that we would not - and will not - have to walk alone. Thank you for meeting us along our path and for extending your outstretched hand to help us financially.”

In 2019, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 350 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,347,419)
- Health premium supplementation for 144 retired clergy and lay employees (\$374,577)
- Emergency grants for 69 individuals and families (\$123,727)
- Christmas “Thank You” gift checks to 521 retired clergy and lay employees (\$260,500)

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund



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Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

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