



ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

ADVENT: WE BRING OUR GIFTS TO GOD

www.zionuccindy.net/worshipathome

The 2nd Sunday of Advent

December 5, 2021

Prelude

Little Baby Jesus

We are Called to Worship – God sends messengers to remind us that the Holy One is always on the side of peace, justice, mercy, and loving kindness. These prophets speak of a day when light will be given to all who live in darkness and despair. Now is the time to prepare the way for this promised day in which God will live among us, and everyone will see the salvation of God.~ On this 2nd Sunday of Advent, we gather to worship the Prince of Peace and to give thanks to God for the promise of peace that we find in the ways of our Savior. In return we bring to God the gift of our courage, that our lives might be instruments of God’s peace on earth.

Lighting Our Advent Wreath

The Gift of Peace

Reader 1: Hear now this reading from Baruch 5:1-9.

Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem,

and put on for ever the beauty of the glory from God.

² Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God;

put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting;

³ for God will show your splendour everywhere under heaven.

⁴ For God will give you evermore the name,

‘Righteous Peace, Godly Glory’.

⁵ Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height;

look towards the east,
and see your children gathered from west and east

at the word of the Holy One,
rejoicing that God has remembered them.

⁶ For they went out from you on foot,
led away by their enemies;
but God will bring them back to you,
carried in glory, as on a royal throne.

⁷ For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills be

made low
and the valleys filled up, to make level ground,
so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God.
⁸ The woods and every fragrant tree

have shaded Israel at God's command.
⁹ For God will lead Israel with joy,
in the light of his glory,
with the mercy and righteousness that
come from him.

Reader 2: In this time of preparing and waiting, we long for even just a glimpse of peace.

Reader 3: There's so much noise around us that disturbs any semblance of peace.

Reader 2: All over the world and throughout this continent, country, state, city, town, village...

Reader 3:...we are hyper-aware of divisions and conflict that tear us apart.

Reader 2: Even in our own workplaces, schools, homes, and bodies, peace evades us.

Reader 3: We need the arrival of the One who provides everlasting peace.

Reader 2: And so, we are preparing the way and reading ourselves...

Reader 3:...to receive guidance and week courage...

Reader 2: To welcome a tiny and helpless little baby who changes the world...

Reader 3: And makes life possible for everyone.

*(Reader 1 lights another **Blue** candle)*

Reader 2: Good news, great joy, all the people!

Reader 3: We are peace-seeking and preparing.+

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

You are welcome to send prayer requests to Pastor Sarah. Spend a few moments connecting with God and lifting up your prayers.

A Time of Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (unison)—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.

We Welcome New Members

The Invitation and Introduction

I would like to invite Bob and June Brown to come forward to officially join us in membership here at Zion United Church of Christ. Bob first attended worship here at Zion the last Wednesday evening Lenten service we had before moving to virtual worship because of the pandemic, but they continued to worship with us online until we were all able to get back to in-person worship. Bob and June are long-time members of our wider UCC family, and Bob served as organist at Zion UCC in Newburgh, Indiana for many years. June was a Sunday School teacher and also served as church secretary for several years. They are joining us today as associate members so they can continue those important relationships with their church family back in Newburgh. We are so grateful they have found a home here at Zion.

Greeting

Friends in Christ, we all are received into the church through the sacrament of baptism. Bob and June have found nurture and support in the midst of the family of Christ. Through prayer and discernment they have been led by the Holy Spirit to affirm their baptism and to claim in our presence their covenantal relationship with Christ and the members of the church. They are here for service to Jesus Christ, using the gifts which the Holy Spirit bestows.

The Sentences

You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are equally citizens with the saints and members of the household of God built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus alone being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in Christ; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

The Promises of the Candidates

Bob and June, do you desire to affirm you baptism into the faith and family of Jesus Christ? ***I DO.***

Do you renounce the powers of evil and desire the freedom of new life in Christ? ***I DO.***

Do you profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? ***I DO.***

Do you promise, by the grace of God, to be Christ's disciple, to follow the way of our Savior, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ as best you are able? ***I PROMISE, WITH THE HELP OF GOD.***

Do you promise, according to the grace given you, to grow in the Christian faith and to be a faithful member of the church of Jesus Christ, celebrating Christ's presence and furthering Christ's mission in all the world? ***I PROMISE, WITH THE HELP OF GOD.***

The Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ [In Unison]

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in Holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

By your baptism you were made one with us in the body of Christ, the church. Today we rejoice in your pilgrimage of faith which has brought you to this time and place. We give thanks for every community of faith that has been your spiritual home, and we celebrate your presence in this household of faith.

The Question About Participation

Do you promise to participate in the life and mission of this family of God's people, sharing regularly in the worship of God and enlisting in the work of this local church as it serves this community and the world?

I PROMISE, WITH THE HELP OF GOD.

The Welcome and Reception

Let us, the members of Zion United Church of Christ express our welcome and affirm our mutual ministry in Christ. We welcome you with joy in the common life of this church. We promise you our friendship and prayers as we share the hopes and labors of the church of Jesus Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit may we continue to grow together in God's knowledge and love and be witnesses of our risen Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of Zion United Church of Christ, we extend to you the hand of Christian love, welcoming you into the company of this local church.

The Prayer

O God, we praise you for calling us to faith and for gathering us into the church, the body of Christ. We thank you for your people gathered in this local church and rejoice that you have increased our community of faith. Together may we live in the Spirit, building one another up in love, sharing in the life and worship of the church, and serving the world for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Benediction: Go in the peace of Christ. Amen.

We Hear God's Word

Luke 3:1-6 (NRSV)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene,² during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.³ He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,⁴ as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

⁵ Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;

⁶ and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." '

Meditation

The Gift of Courage

We Gather at the Table



Set Your Place at the Table—Communion was first celebrated in the homes of those in the early church. Friends and family would gather together to pray, singing songs, and break bread. We carry on that tradition today. Whatever you have on hand to celebrate communion will work just fine, because this ancient ritual is not about what we use for this meal or where we partake of it. Instead, it is about the act of remembrance. So, gather around the table, prepare your place, and remember that Christ is in our midst.

Our Invitation—God’s love was made incarnate in the gift of our Savior. Here at Christ’s table, we get a glimpse of God’s kingdom, where the Prince of Peace welcomes all we desire to know his grace and mercy to feast together as one. Here we gather, not as enemy or stranger, but as friend, neighbor, family.

The Words of Institution—On the night when Jesus was to be betrayed, he gathered with his friends in that upper room to celebrate the Passover meal, a meal of remembrance of the liberation of God’s people from slavery in Egypt, a journey that would lead them deep into the wilderness. After the meal was over, Jesus took the bread that was left, broke it, blessed it, and said, “Take and eat, this is my body broken for you.” In the same way, he took the cup, the fruit of the vine, and pouring it out he said, “This is the cup of the new covenant, my blood shed for you and the forgiveness of sins. As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, remember me.” Today, we remember Christ’s body broken for us and blood shed for us as bread is transformed into mercy and wine into compassion. As we prepare to receive this holy meal, let us ready our hearts by confessing our sins to God. Let us pray.

Our Confession— We are thrilled to welcome the coming Christ child into our midst! Preparations are underway, and yet they sometimes block God’s path to our hearts and clutter our ability to fully perceive the Gift of this season. We lose ourselves in the competitive clutches of the accumulation of things. We measure our worth against productivity and busyness, deepening our disconnection from God and each other. Forgive us, God of Peace. Remove the glamorous illusions that prevent us from being holy and

whole...Hear now our prayers for healing and restoration...(a time for silent confession)...+

Assurance of Grace— Unending peace awaits us! You, God, are tender and merciful. You unrelentingly draw us deeper into your serenity, saving us from our own chaos. Good news, great joy, all the people!+ Know that this day, you are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Blessing Our Meal— Pour out your Holy Spirit on us, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be the body of Christ to a world that sits too often in gloom and fear. Creator of all, Light of the world, Spirit of truth, you are the one God to whom we offer our praise and our thanks. Amen.~

We Share the Bread and the Cup – As you eat the bread, remember, “This is the body of Christ broken for you.” Take and eat. As you drink the cup, remember, “This is the blood of Christ shed for you and the forgiveness of sins.” Take and drink.

We Give Thanks—Almighty God, we give you thanks for the gift of our Savior’s presence in the simplicity and splendor of this holy meal. Unite us with all who are fed by Christ’s body and blood that we may faithfully proclaim the good news of your love and that your universal church may be a rainbow of hope in an uncertain world; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.+

We Respond to God's Word with Our Giving

Invitation— Through our giving, we can be messengers of the Good News, providing peace to all the people. We cheerfully open our wallets, purses, pockets, apps, and hearts to give what God has first gifted to us.+

December Benevolence— The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. United Church of Christ congregations and members

have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need.

You can mail your offerings to our office or give online at www.zionuccindy.net/donate

A Doxology for Advent

By Rev. Scott Cervas, to the tune of Greensleeves

These gifts we joyfully bring to you,
to fill the world with meaning;
our hearts and minds are longing for
the life of which you are dreaming.
This, this our gift we bring,
our lives we share, your praise we sing;
show us your vision, Lord,
for hope, and peace, and caring.

We Give Thanks— Thank you for these gifts that we have the privilege of sharing on this day. May they create pathways to peace in our collective and individual lives...Accept these gifts and make them useful for your greater work in this world. Bless every cent, dollar, minute, hour, skill, talent, mind, and body generously and freely offered to you, gracious God. Amen.+

Hymn

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, #185

We Are Sent Forth with a Blessing—Though the pathways ahead may be rocky and rough, the Prince of Peace leads the way to salvation. With courage we will follow, that others, too, might see the guiding light of Christ, and know of his ways of peace, justice, and mercy. Let us go forth as instruments of peace that we might serve and enrich the world around. Amen.

Postlude

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

+UCC Pension Board; ~ Scifres, Mary; Beu, B. J.. The Abingdon Worship Annual 2021 (p. 272). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition