



ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

ADVENT: WE BRING OUR GIFTS TO GOD

www.zionuccindy.net/worshipathome

The 3rd Sunday of Advent

December 12, 2021

Prelude

Carols at the Manger

We are Called to Worship – In the letter to the Philippians, Paul declares:
4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

In Christ we find everlasting joy that leads to eternal peace in our lives. When we are able to live in that joy, it makes room in our lives for us to live fully and richly. The joy of knowing Christ nurtures in us a capacity to love more and serve more. It opens our hearts to give thanks and praise. Today, we celebrate the gift of joy we know in Christ, and we, in return, bring the gift of our creativity, as we share the wonder and beauty of this life with one another.

Lighting Our Advent Wreath

The Gift of Joy

Reader 1: Hear these prophetic words from Isaiah 12:2-6

² Surely God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid,
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my
might;

he has become my salvation.
³ With joy you will draw water from the
wells of salvation. ⁴And you will say on
that day:

Give thanks to the LORD,
call on his name;
make known his deeds among the
nations;
proclaim that his name is exalted.

⁵ Sing praises to the LORD, for he has
done gloriously;
let this be known in all the earth.

⁶ Shout aloud and sing for joy,
O royal Zion,

for great in your midst is the Holy One
of Israel.

Reader 2: If you're happy and you know it, clap our hands!

Reader 1: We can easily clap in this shared space. Deep down, though, we wonder:

Reader 2: Are we happy? We're tempted to put on our happy faces for the sake of others

Reader 1: and we work hard to make sense of it in the face of so much struggle.

Reader 2: Happiness is fleeting. Joy, however, is our birthright!

Reader 1: The One we await embodies the inherent joy that's already ours.

Reader 2: No one can take it from us, so we can actually "rejoice in the Lord always!"

Reader 1: We can express joy in our laughter, relationships, work, and play

Reader 2: We can express joy in our breathing and living, doing and being.

Reader 1: Rejoice! Joy is ours always and in all things.

(Reader 2 lights the **PINK** Advent candle)

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

Reader 1: We are joy-filled and eager!+

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.

Christmas Pageant—The Gift of Joy

In response to the joy we know in Christ, so often we can't help but lift up our hearts in praise. When we let the joy of Christ sink deeply into our spirits, we can't help but burst forth into song. The gift of creativity allows us to share our joy with one another. It allows us to find wonderful ways to say "thank you" to our great

Creator God. Through poetry and song, through painting and mosaic, through crafting and laughing, through play and pageant, God has gifted us with talents and abilities that allow us to bring glory to God. We have some special folks today who are going to do just that for our Christmas Pageant.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel One-Rehearsal Christmas Play

Adapted and written by Susan Lukey

Thank you to Mindy Murphy for directing our pageant and to all of our participants!

We Respond to God's Word with Our Giving

Invitation— Imagine the joy we can incite with the gifts we're called to share! What little we have becomes a lot when we bring it together and pour our offerings into the ministries we support... Through our giving, we can be messengers of the Good News, rekindling joy to all the people... We cheerfully open our wallets, purses, apps, and hearts to give what God has first gifted to us.+

Angel Tree Gifts—A few weeks ago we learned of a Franklin Township family that went through a devastating loss—a father lost during a routine surgery, leaving behind three teenage boys and a wife. Then just a few days later, a woman called the church wondering if we were offering any assistance for Christmas gifts this year. After being injured at work, she wondered how she would put Christmas dinner on the table and gifts under the tree. Through your generosity, we found simply ways we could share our love with these neighbors. Thank you to all who were able to participate in Round 2 of our Angel Tree this year, sharing the love and the light of this season.

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—God, this day we joyfully bring our gifts to you. Having found a deep, everlasting joy in Jesus Christ our Savior, we express our gratitude to you through our time and talents, our resources and our creativity, as we say “thank you” for all you have done. Today, especially, we lift up to you our Angel Tree gifts and ask that you bless and enrich these gifts, that they might bring hope and joy to our neighbors and we share our love with them. Thank you, God, for this opportunity to serve our neighbors and you and to do your work in this world. Amen.

Hymn

Angels We Have Heard on High, #188

We Are Sent Forth with a Blessing—With joy in our hearts, having heard the Good News of God with Us, Emmanuel, we go forth into the world to share our gift of creativity that others, too, might get a glimpse of the joy we have found in Christ Jesus. Go forth to share your joy. Go forth to serve and enrich the world around you. Amen.

Postlude

Good Christian Men, Rejoice

+UCC Pension Board. Christmas Fund.