



ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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**ADVENT: WE BRING OUR GIFTS TO GOD**

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[www.zionuccindy.net/worshipathome](http://www.zionuccindy.net/worshipathome)

*The 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent*  
December 19, 2021

**Prelude**

**We are Called to Worship**—Today we celebrate the gift of love that we have known through Jesus Christ. Long ago, in that little town of Bethlehem, a young woman gave birth to a tiny baby, a baby who was God’s love incarnate, God’s love born in flesh and bone, God’s love born on earth. When that young woman found out that she would bear God’s love, she couldn’t help but give praise to God. This was a God who noticed the lowly, who would feed the hungry, who would act with justice and mercy and care. In response to this great gift of God’s love in Jesus Christ, we, too, bring our gifts of praise this day.

**Lighting Our Advent Wreath**

*The Gift of Love*

**Reader 1:** Hear this song of praise from Psalm 96:

<sup>1</sup> O sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing to the LORD, all the earth.  
<sup>2</sup> Sing to the LORD, bless his name;  
tell of his salvation from day to day.  
<sup>3</sup> Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous works among all the  
peoples.  
<sup>4</sup> For great is the LORD, and greatly to  
be praised...  
<sup>11</sup> Let the heavens be glad, and let the  
earth rejoice;

let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
<sup>12</sup> let the field exult, and everything in  
it.  
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing  
for joy  
<sup>13</sup> before the LORD; for he is coming,  
for he is coming to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world with  
righteousness,  
and the peoples with his truth.

**Reader 2:** Relatives. Friends. Pets. Plants. Time. Gifts. Service.

**Reader 1:** These are a few things to engage and express our love.

**Reader 2:** Pungent animal smells. Straw mattress. Young unwed parents.  
Traveling visitors.

**Reader 1:** These are a few things that welcome the arrival of love.

**Reader 2:** Apathy. Ignorance. Greed. Self-reliance. Exploitation. Violence.

**Reader 1:** These are a few things that threaten love in action.

**Reader 2:** Life. Justice. Peace. Wholeness. Creation. Us. You. Me.

**Reader 1:** These are a few things that Love embraces unconditionally.

(Reader 2 lights the last Blue Advent candle)

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

**Reader 1:** We are love-ready and empowered!

### **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 Hear God's Word**

Luke 1:39-55 (NRSV)

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

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said,  
'My soul magnifies the Lord,  
<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God

my Savior,  
<sup>48</sup> for he has looked with favor on the  
lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations  
will call me blessed;  
<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great  
things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
<sup>50</sup> His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the  
thoughts of their hearts.  
<sup>52</sup> He has brought down the powerful

from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;  
<sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with  
good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.  
<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
<sup>55</sup> according to the promise he made to  
our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants for  
ever.’

### **Special Music**

*Mary Did You Know*, Kaylee Gephart, Cello

### **Meditation**

*The Gift of Praise*

### **We Respond to God's Word with Our Giving**

**Invitation**— When we give only a portion of what we have, we sometimes overlook the fact that life-changing ministry occurs where our combined gifts land. Literal lives are at the other end of our donations when we contribute to the Christmas Fund, our benevolence offering for December. Our gifts help to supplement the payment of health benefit premiums of lower-income retired United Church of Christ clergy and lay employees who have given years of service to us. Our offerings are but one way we can express our love for God and the people our ministries serve. Through our giving, we can be messengers of the Good News, expressing love 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](http://www.zionuccindy.net/donate)

## **Discerning the Gifts We Can Bring – 2022 Time and Talent Survey**

### **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**— May these gifts become expressions of love and care for those who are most in need. Transform them and us into agents of change toward a world where no one is lacking, and everyone has enough and more. Bless every cent, dollar, minute, hour, skill, talent, mind, and body generously and freely offered to you, gracious God. Amen.+

### **Hymn**

*Go, Tell It on the Mountain, #218*

**We Are Sent Forth with a Blessing**—The hope, peace, joy, and love of our Savior has been our guide this Advent. This week we journey to Bethlehem, to the manger where God's love was born that Christmas night. As you go forth this week, carry in your hearts songs of praise, as we prepare to worship Jesus Christ the newborn king. Go in with love and praise to serve and enrich the world around you. Amen.

### **Postlude**