

ADVENT IN PLAIN SIGHT

Finding the magic of Christmas in ordinary objects.



FIFTH AVE. UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
323 South 5th Avenue, West Bend WI 53095

First Sunday of Advent ~ December 3, 2023

Ellen Johnson, Advent Reader
Polly Bertelsen, Liturgist
Deanna Gibeau, Organist
Rev. Clarissa Martinelli, Senior Pastor

JOIN US IN PERSON OR ONLINE ~ Sundays, 9:30 A.M.

WELCOME TO FIFTH AVE. UMC

We Are Glad You Are Here! We are so thankful that you have joined us today for Worship. We would love to get to know you and help you get to know us. Join us following worship for Fellowship Hour. There will be yummy refreshments and coffee and lots of *friendly faces*.

***Note: L - denotes worship "Leader"; P - denotes "People"**

~FAITH ON THE GO~

You can contact Pastor Clarissa at any time: you're going into the hospital; you would like a prayer said for you; you are not able to come to church for more than a month; you have a question or concern about something at church; your conscience is troubling you and you want assurance of God's grace; you're wrestling with a spiritual issue or have a question about something the Bible says; you have a friend or relative who wants to know more about Jesus; fellowship with the Pastor. This is not an exhaustive list. You can certainly contact Pastor Clarissa at other times too. In addition to Pastor Clarissa, Ellen Johnson, as our Lay Servant, is available to assist you in these needs as well. Their contact information:

Pastor Clarissa: 847-721-1826; Ms. Ellen Johnson: 262-339-7673.

~GATHERING GOD'S PEOPLE~

PRELUDE:

“Rock of Ages”

Thomas Hastings

~CANDLE LIGHTING LITURGY~

Reader: The Gospel of John speaks of Christ as the true light coming into the world. In commemoration of that coming, we light candles for the four weeks leading to Christmas and reflect on the coming of Christ. It is significant that the church has always used that language--the *coming* of Christ--because it speaks to a deep truth. Christ IS coming. Christ IS ALWAYS coming, always entering a troubled world, a wounded heart. And so we light the first candle, the candle of **HOPE**, and dare to express our longing for peace, for healing and the well-being of all creation.

All: Loving God, as we enter this Advent season, we open all the dark places in our lives and memories to the healing light of Christ. Show us the power of HOPE. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you that we may walk in the light of Christ.

Reader: Take time, in the busyness of this season, for quiet reflection, for the light of God's love is discernible everywhere. Welcome Christ into your heart this season and go forth with the knowledge that Christ is coming and is our **Hope**.

Advent Hymn:

“Come, O Come, Emmanuel (vs. 1)”

UMH 211

CENTERING MUSIC:

“Jesus, Thou My Dearest Life”

J.S. Bach

***CALL TO WORSHIP: (Responsively)**

L: We gather again at the end of the year to wait for the Christ child anew.

P: We wait in the shocking hope of the coming of the Messiah.

L: We wait, and we remember the astounding things God has done to save God's people.

P: We wait in the shocking hope of the coming of the Messiah.

L: We wait, and we pay attention for signs of God's justice and mercy turning the world upside down.

P: We wait in the shocking hope of the coming of the Messiah.

L: We wait, and in our waiting, we learn to live as people of God's promise.

P: Let us worship in the shocking hope of Jesus Christ, the coming Messiah. Amen.

***OPENING PRAYER: (Unison)**

God of justice and peace, from the heavens, you rain down mercy and kindness, that all on earth may stand in awe and wonder before your marvelous deeds. Raise our heads in expectation, that we may yearn for the coming day of the Lord and stand without blame before your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

CALL TO CONFESSION: (Unison)

We confess that we are not ready. We call on you to rend the heavens and come down, and yet we aren't ready for you to rend our hearts and enter in. When it comes to meeting you face-to-face, we hesitate. We fear what you will find in us and among us. We are uncertain that we really want our lives to be turned upside down by the good news. We want the hope

that comes with knowing you are coming to us, but we're not sure we're ready for the shock of that hope. Forgive us, we pray. Free us from our fear that we might joyfully live in the hope that shakes us up and turns us around to follow you.

Silent confession.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS: (Responsively)

L: Hear the good news: God is the Potter, and we are the clay. We are the work of God's hand. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

All: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN:** "Grace Alone" TFWs 2162

~WE PROCLAIM~

***PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION – Matthew 24:30-35 (Unison)**

L: Gracious God, give us humble, teachable, and obedient hearts, that we may receive what you have revealed and do what you have commanded. Amen.

All: From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

L: The Word of God for the People of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

CHANCEL CHOIR

"Waiting"

Dave Bertelsen, Director

SERMON:

"ADVENT IN PLAIN SIGHT - GATES"

Pastor Clarissa

~ADVENT COMMUNION SERVICE~

L: Holy God, we give thanks for your creation, fragile, yet fruitful, enough for all.

We give thanks that you call us into community where love and justice may flourish, enough for all. We give thanks that you invite us on this Advent journey. Awake, curious, longing to meet you, we set out for your table of grace.

You light our path one step at a time, beckoning us onto a Way that offers us new eyes to explore the vision of the Promised One; new senses to feel the heartbeat of the Vulnerable One new courage to share the urgency of the Ruler of Peace.

One more step, one more stretch, one more challenge takes us deeper into the mystery of your abundant life: a world healed, renewed; all nature, all people at peace.

Along the Way we join our voices with those of all created beings in Heaven, and on Earth singing:

All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Pastor: We give you thanks for sending us, Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-Us, whose life, death and resurrection have become for us the Way to find you, to know you, to join with you in creating your new heaven and new earth.

We remember the night when Jesus gathered at table with his friends in a time of struggle and fear, took bread, blessed it and gave it to them saying "Take and eat: for this is my body."

And after supper, as Jesus looked forward to your desired day of joy and power; he took the cup of wine, again gave You thanks and praise and said "Take this, all of you, and drink. This is the cup of the new covenant, my life poured out for you. I will drink this with you again in the reign of God. Share this bread and this cup in memory of me."

Come now, Holy Spirit of God. As you were present at Creation, be present now, and let these gifts of bread and cup become for us the bread of life and the cup of blessing. As you were sent by Jesus to accompany us on our journey of faith, be present now, and transform this Beloved community sharing this bread and cup, from many parts into the one body of Christ.

As we wait, during this blessed rest known as the season of Advent, we proclaim the mystery of faith:

All: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever. **Amen.**

PRAYER after COMMUNION: (Unison)

All: At this table, Christ is the host, welcoming all who hunger. At our tables, may Christ be our guest this day and always, that we might welcome hope, peace, joy, and love into our lives, and become hosts to God's presence and people. God of Love, guide us to the stables of our world, where the lonely and longing gather. Lead us to the mangers of our time, where hope and renewal are born again. Make us heralds of your love and joy. Amen.

~PRAYERS, JOYS & CONCERNS~

Pastor: God of all goodness:

People: hear our prayer.

P: Let us pray: You are the potter, and we are the clay, O God. Remind us yet again that we are the work of your hand, not the other way around. When we have insisted you act according to our rules, when we have closed our ears to your call, and warped your design, forgive us. Press and mold us anew, that we may better reflect your image. Give us courage to work not for ourselves, but for the coming of your kingdom that makes all things new. We pray in the name of the coming Christ. Amen.

Merciful God, hear us as we pray to you as your Son taught us to pray, saying:

All: 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

~INVITATION TO SHARING OUR GIFTS, TITHES, & OFFERINGS~

***DOXOLOGY:** **“Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”** **UMH 94**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts! Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

OFFERTORY PRAYER: (unison)

All: Great God of wonderful surprises: we enter this season of preparation for your Son’s coming, looking not for just a memory of past events, but anticipating a return. The master is near. We strive to get our lives in order and pray that our giving of ourselves to these preparations might reflect the earth-shaking importance of his coming. Help us to give ourselves generously, for we do not know the time -- day or the hour. We pray in the name of the one who will come. Amen. (Mark 13:24-37)

***CLOSING HYMN:** **“To God Be the Glory!”** **UMH 98**

~SENDING FORTH/BENEDICTION~

L: In this season of hope, we ask that you reinvigorate us and redirect us to the hope that we find in you, Gracious God. Lead us not into despair but lead us beside still waters that we might invite others to the peace that passes all understanding. God of Hope,

P: draw near to us.

Pastor: Beloved of God, keep awake! Stay alert! Pay attention to God at work all around you. And now, go from this place blessed to be bowled over by hope and shocked out of our complacency to watch and wait and join in the work of bringing God’s dream for all creation to life.

***POSTLUDE:** **“Aria” Guiseppe Antionio Paganelli**

