## **DECEMBER 2021**

# THE EVANGEL

THE NEWSLETTER OF 🕇 AUDUBON PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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REJOICES

Do you remember as a child what it was like enduring those days and weeks before Christmas? In so many ways it's the anticipation that makes Christmas, Christmas.

"A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices!" This single phrase from John Dwight's classic Christmas Carol, O Holy Night, captures in so many ways the true spirit of Christmas. For thousands of years, the world waited for the fulfillment of God's promises. For generations the people had been waiting anxiously for the birth of the prophesied Messiah.

At the heart of the Christmas story is a deep sense of hope for what could be. When Jesus came to earth, born in a manger, his presence meant that God had not abandoned humanity. As we celebrate the birth of the Messiah, we too have reason to celebrate. We are not alone and we can have hope that things in our lives can change too.

The culmination of the Christmas season at Audubon Park Church is our Candlelight Christmas Eve service. Plan to share in one of the most beautiful and meaningful worship services of the year.

Join us for Candlelight Christmas Eve Service In-Person at 5pm and 8pm and Online.



Rev. Geoff Helton Lead Pastor

geoff@audubonparkumc.org fb.com/geoffhelton



small groups

Tuesdays at 6:30pm
On Zoom w/ Pastor Geoff Helton

Wednesdays at 11am In-Person w/Pastor Glenn Kennedy

#### Thursdays at Noon

In-Person w/Karen Peacock

Join one of our advent small groups! We'll gather for 4 weeks to discuss the week's sermon and the book that we're basing our advent sermon series on.



Books are available from Aunties, Amazon, and other booksellers.

Contact the church office to sign up for one of these groups!

# FROM THE LEAD PASTOR

With the packing up of the Thanksgiving leftovers, we turn our attention to the season of Advent, in which we wait for Jesus' arrival at Christmas. It's not a boring, passive waiting season, though: it's a season in which we prepare our hearts to receive the Christ again. This year in worship, we'll focus on an honest and real look at the stories of Christmas as we seek to reclaim the wonder and joy of Christmas. The Advent season culminates with our Candlelight Christmas Eve services as we worship the newborn King.

Our theme for this year's Christmas Eve service, "the weary world rejoices," comes from the song *O Holy Night*. After all, that's how this season has felt, isn't it? At the end of a year that's seemed about a decade long, we're collectively exhausted. Worn out.

There's a lot to be weary of... Many are exhausted with the changes, the mandates, the masks and a new coronavirus variant on the way... And it's not just the pandemic! There's the "Great Resignation," in which many are making changes in their work and career. The political divide in our country seems to only get greater and more divisive. There's so much to be weary of.

Over the years, we've all sung "O Holy Night" countless times. But until the last two years, I'd never really paused to reflect on four words from the songs that some times seem to get lost-in -passing — "the weary world rejoices" — or their implications. After all, when Jesus was born under less-than-ideal circumstances 2000 years ago, he was born into aweary world. he Jewish people had been awaiting their Messiah. They'd experienced slavery, famine, and war; they'd spent years wandering in the desert; they'd endured generations of anxiety and uncertainty as they watched...waited...wondered. When would their promised King arrive? When would redemption come? When would they, at long last, see a light at the end of a very dark and weary tunnel?

When our Christ was born, he brought with him, as the song says, "a thrill of hope." The trials we face today are real. The suffering we experience today is real. Our weariness is real. But the hope we find in Jesus Christ is also real. This Christmas Eve we'll explore the hope that is born to us at Christmas, especially the ways that hope shows up in our lives.

My prayers are with you as we journey through this Advent season seeking to reclaim the wonder and joy of Christmas so that even in our weariness we may rejoice!

Grace & Peace -Pastor Geoff

**P.S.** I know that many of you are anxious to hear an update on our current Covid policies. We are watching the case numbers and other statistics for our area closely and hope to have an update for you soon.



If you have any questions about our youth group program please contact Drew Homchick for more info: drew@audubonparkumc.org

#### YOUTH GROUP SCHEDULE

#### ALL YOUTH EVENT

Sunday, December 5th | 1pm - 2:30pm Come join us for our monthly All Youth Event with other United Methodist churches in the area for an afternoon filled of fellowship and fun!

#### **GROG**

Monday, December 13th | 6pm - 7:30pm We will play GROG and other hide and seek games. Make sure to bring your running shoes!

#### CHRISTMAS MOVIE

Monday, December 20th | 6pm - 7:30pm It's time to get in the Christmas spirit. Come and join us for an evening filled with entertainment, fellowship, and holiday treats.

#### **SELF PORTRAITS**

Monday, December 27th | 6pm - 7:30pm

It's time to liven up the youth room a bit and what better way then designing self portraits of ourselves to decorate the walls. Feel free to use any art supplies we have at the church or bring your own as we create self portraits and other fun art projects.

#### SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Our Youth Sunday School program (6th grade - 12th grade) will meet downstairs in the youth room on **Sundays from 9am - 10am**.

Hello friends at Audubon Park UMC! We wanted to extend a special thank you and an invitation for you to join us at our third birthday party. There are so many things that could have stopped us (the pandemic and the incredibly high fail-rate of church plants to name just two) but we've made it this far and we're going to celebrate! Thank you for your prayers, your donations, your presence at experimental services, and everything else you've done for us to get this new congregation going. Please join us! RSVP on our website: <a href="https://www.westcentralabbey.org">www.westcentralabbey.org</a>.

Thanks so much!

Peace, Pastor Katy





# Hello there, church! I simply can't believe Advent is approaching!

Recording for virtual Christmas choir can happen one of two ways:

- record a video of yourself singing along to an audio track (at home like last year) or
- 2) schedule an appointment with me to record at the church.

The recording dates will be limited to Dec. 3rd & Dec. 4th. This gives me enough time to edit everything by Christmas! Please email me at <a href="mailto:cole@audubonparkumc.org">cole@audubonparkumc.org</a> to schedule a recording time and to get the practice track and lyrics. If you'd like to record at home, email me and I'll send you the same materials!

I truly wish we could sing together as we have done for years, but I'm doing as much as I can to lift our voices in worship from afar.

Blessings, Cole

# henest advent

#### november 28 — december 26

Worship with us **in-person at 9am & 11am** or **online at 11am** on Facebook, YouTube, or our website.

For too many of us, Christmas has lost its wonder. Maybe for you, the joy of the season is painfully dissonant with the hard edges of life right now. Or maybe you feel wearied by the way Christmas has become a polished, predictable brand. Or maybe this sacred story feels too far removed from our world today, a world that's hard to make sense of.

But what if the Christmas story is not just something that happened a long time ago . . . but a story that is still happening today? Honest Advent, our upcoming sermon series will explore the astonishing, hope-filled truth that the God who showed up in the hardest parts of our humanity is still doing so today.

Join us this Advent as we discover how the wonder of Godwith-Us is still happening today: in our unexpected change of plans, our unaccomplished dreams, our overcrowded lodgings, our humble stories of new beginnings. In a world that's difficult to make sense of, and a season that's so often overtaken by consumerism, find here fresh eyes to see this powerfully sacred story.

Jesus appeared in a way no one expected: incarnating by way of human vulnerability. He does the exact same thing in our lives today: bringing light and life through our ordinary everyday vulnerabilities.

Visit audubonparkumc.org for more info on this series including a reflection guide, small groups and more!



A big thank you to everyone who turned in a pledge card for our annual generosity campaign! Your generous support will help our church continue to serve one another and our community in love. Haven't turned in your pledge form? There's still time! Go to **audub onparkumc.org/give** to learn more about giving to Christ's mission and ministry through Audubon Park Church.

# EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON

And other lies we love

# january 2 — february 27

"Everything happens for a reason..."
"God helps those who help themselves..."
"God won't give you more than you can handle..."

They are simple phrases. They sound Christian — like something you might even find in the Bible.

We've all heard these words. Maybe we've said them. They capture some element of truth—yet they also miss the point in very important ways.

Inspired by the best-selling book *Everything Happens for a Rea-son: And Other Lies I've Loved* by Kate Bowler, our new sermon series explores five these half truths and lies that we are tempted to believe as Christians.

Worship with us **in-person at 9am & 11am** or **online at 11am** on Facebook, YouTube, or our website.

### **DECEMBER**

For more information on church meetings or events, please see the church website: audubonparkumc.org.

#### Wednesday, 12/1

Honest Advent with Pastor Glenn | 11 am (parlor) Knitters | 1 pm

#### Thursday, 12/2

Honest Advent with Karen Peacock | 12 pm (parlor)

#### Friday, 12/3

Stephen Ministry Meeting | 10 am

#### Sunday, 12/5-Second Sunday of Advent

Camp Audubon Sunday School | 9 am Audubon Park In-person Service | 9 am & 11 am Audubon Park Online Worship | 11 am

#### Monday, 12/6

Bible Study Group | 11:30 am

#### Tuesday, 12/7

Quilting Group| 9 am Staff Meeting | 10 am Honest Advent with Pastor Geoff| 6:30 pm (zoom)

#### Wednesday, 12/8

Honest Advent with Pastor Glenn | 11 am (parlor) Knitters | 1 pm

#### Thursday, 12/9

Honest Advent with Karen Peacock | 12 pm (parlor)

#### Sunday, 12/12 - Third Sunday of Advent

Camp Audubon Sunday School | 9 am Audubon Park In-Person Service | 9 am & 11 am Audubon Park Online Worship | 11 am

#### Monday, 12/13

Art Group | 9 am Bible Study Group |11:30 am

#### Tuesday, 12/14

APUMC Food Bank | 8:30 -11:30 pm Quilting Group | 9 am

Honest Advent with Pastor Geoff | 6:30 pm (zoom)

#### Wednesday, 12/15

Honest Advent with Pastor Glenn | 11 am (parlor) Knitters | 1 pm

#### Friday, 12/17

Stephen Ministry Meeting | 10 am

#### Sunday, 12/19 - Fourth Sunday of Advent

Camp Audubon Sunday School 9 am Audubon Park In-person Service 9 am & 11 am Audubon Park Online Worship 11 am

#### Monday, 12/20

Bible Study Group |11:30 am

#### Tuesday, 12/21

#### Longest Night Christmas Service | 12 PM

Quilting Group | 9 am Staff Meeting | 10 am Honest Advent with Pastor Geoff | 6:30 pm (zoom)

#### Wednesday, 12/22

Honest Advent with Pastor Glenn | 11 am (parlor) Knitters | 1 pm

#### Thursday, 12/23

Honest Advent with Karen Peacock | 12 pm (parlor)

#### Friday, 12/24-Christmas Eve

6:00am Online Christmas Eve Service Available 5:00 pm In Person Christmas Eve Service 8:00 pm In Person Christmas Eve Service

#### Sunday, 12/26

Camp Audubon Sunday School 9 am Audubon Park In-Person Service 9 am & 11 am Audubon Park Online Worship 11 am

#### Monday, 12/27 - Church Office Closed

Art Group | 9 am Bible Study Group |11:30 am

#### Tuesday, 12/28 - Church Office Closed

AP Food Bank | 8:30-11:30 pm Quilting Group | 9 am

#### Wednesday, 12/29 - Church Office Closed

Knitters | 1 pm

Thursday, 12/30 - Church Office Closed

## **Birthdays**

- 8 Genevieve Leger
- 9 Clara Caley
- 13 Estel Harvey
- 15 Sheila Clark
- 19 Sandi Nicol
- 22 Ann Sundgren
- 25 Jan Cooper
- 26 Chris Nicol
- 30 Darius Strobeck
- 31 Joe Hilderbrand, Bill Strobeck

#### **Anniversaries**

11 - Paul & Barbara Burns

20 - Jim & Jean Enzler

29 - Rich & Connie Hendershot

30 - Vince & Laura Velonza



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# SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP SCHEDULE

# IN-PERSON at 9AM & 11AM ONLINE at 11AM

FOR MORE INFO AND TO RESERVE YOUR SEAT GO TO: audubonparkumc.org

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AUDUBON PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH