

You Are Welcome Here!



**An "Open and Affirming" Congregation
of the United Church of Christ
in Germantown, MD**

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF SENECA VALLEY

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December 13, 2020

Third Sunday in Advent

I Believe in God even when God is Silent

10:00 am Zoom

Our Mission

UCC Seneca Valley is an open and affirming, progressive and inclusive spiritual community that is centered in the belief that we are all beloved children of God. We seek to joyfully share Christ's message of hope through creative expression, deepening connections between people, advocating for justice, and serving our community.

Worship Participants

Greeter: Terri Molaski

Liturgist: John Bartkowiak

Pastor: Rev. Holly R. Jackson

Deacon: Bryan Young

Director of Music Ministry: Stefan Petrov

Zoom Technical Support: Patrick Jackson

Instructions for Zoom Worship:

As you sit down to worship bring your Advent Wreath with you if you have one. If you don't have an Advent Wreath then just bring three candles with you (flame or electric). Keep your microphone on mute during worship unless told otherwise. Words in bold are meant to be said aloud at home with the Pastor or Liturgist who will say them on the Zoom call. Sing along at home to the sung responses and hymns. Use the chat box for the passing of the peace and prayer requests or other worship responses. Chat directly to individuals as appropriate. If you are having technical issues please chat message Patrick Jackson for help. The Zoom room opens at 9:30am and worship begins at 10.

Praying and Searching for Signs of Joy
Welcome & Announcements

Prelude

Call to Worship

Liturgist: We wait in the darkness, expectantly, longingly, anxiously, thoughtfully.
The darkness is our friend.

People: **In the darkness of the womb, we have all been nurtured and protected. In the darkness of the womb the Christ-child was made ready for the journey into light.**

Liturgist: It is only in the darkness that we can see the splendor of the universe – blankets of stars, the solitary glowing of the planets. It was the darkness that allowed the Magi to find the star that guided them to where the Christ-child lay.

People: **In the darkness of the night, desert people find relief from the cruel relentless heat of the sun. In the blessed desert darkness Mary and Joseph were able to flee with the infant Jesus to safety in Egypt.**

Liturgist: In the darkness of sleep, we are soothed and restored, healed and renewed. In the darkness of sleep, dreams rise up.

People: **God spoke to Joseph and the wise men through dreams. God is speaking still.**

Liturgist: Sometimes in the solitude of the darkness our fears and concerns, our hopes and visions rise to the surface.

People: **We come face to face with ourselves and with the road that lies ahead of us.**

Liturgist: **And in that same darkness we find companionship for the journey.**

Liturgist: In that same darkness we sometimes allow ourselves to wonder and worry whether the human race is going to survive. And then, in the darkness we know that you are with us, O God, yet still we await your coming.

People: **In the darkness that contains both our hopelessness and our hope, we watch for a sign of God's hope. For you are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.**

Testimony "In these challenging times, I believe in joy because..."
Maggie Nyamweya

Advent Wreath Lighting Prayer

Reader 1: Holy One, we thank you for the glimpses we catch of your gift of the depths of joy. Even in the midst of fear, of challenge, of struggle—even when we are not sure of your presence, ignite the flame of joy within us, that we might glow with its brilliance from the inside out. Help us

face the silence of unknowing and embrace it as the pregnant pause before joyful new beginnings.

Reader 2: You are invited to light three candles on your Advent Wreath at home, the two you lit last week and a new one this week. If you have a traditional set of candles this week you should light the pink candle. If you don't have an Advent Wreath simply light any three candles.

Musical Response

"I Believe"

Mark Miller

Invitation to Confession

Liturgist: In this season of Advent, we are reminded of God's love for us, shown in the impossible act of God becoming incarnate, taking on human flesh, to reach us in love and remind us of how to live together with peace. This is the God to whom we pray, to whom we make our confession. Let us then come to God with the truth of our lives, first in silent prayer. (A chime calls us to a moment of silence.)

Prayer of Confession

**People: O Holy God of Promise,
we so often place our trust in the things we can see,
and touch, and easily believe.
But you did not ask us to believe what is easy,
you have asked us to believe what is true!
Forgive us, Holy One, when we doubt the ways you work.
Forgive us when we find it hard to believe an ancient story or to act on
its message.
Remind us to work for change even as we wait for justice.
Remind us to do what we can to heal even as we wait for restored
health.
When we can't hear your voice, O God, give us ears to listen. Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Liturgist: God knows it's sometimes hard to hear the whisperings of the Spirit. God forgives our doubts and our failings and reminds us once again that all who have ears to hear should listen for holy promises of love, peace, hope, and joy. They are for us and for all of creation. Go in peace and serve the God who gives you life.

Passing of the Peace

(We will drop out of the powerpoint and unmute you. You are encouraged to wave, say Christ's peace aloud, and/or write your offering of peace to all in the chat.)

Hymn

"Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn"

107 v.1, 2 & 4

**Awake! Awake and greet the new morn,
for angels herald its dawning,**

sing out your joy, for Jesus is born,
behold! the Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor,
to bring all hearts together,
to open wide the heavenly door,
and lives now inside us forever.

To us, to all in sorrow and fear,
Emmanuel comes a-singing,
whose humble song is quiet and near,
yet fills the earth with its ringing.
Music to heal the broken soul
and hymns of loving kindness,
the thunder of the anthems roll
to shatter all hate and injustice.

Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night,
though cold the winter and cheerless,
the rising sun shall crown you with light,
be strong and loving and fearless;
Love be our song and love our prayer,
and love, our endless story,
may God fill every day we share,
and bring us at last into glory.

Listening for Signs of Joy
Children's Message

Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 57:14-19

Gospel Reading

Luke 1: 1-4; 26-45

Sermon

Rev. Holly Jackson

Musical Response

Responding with Joy in our Hearts
Community Life and Concerns

(We will drop out of the Powerpoint here. Please feel free to write your prayer concerns in the chat box.)

God is good, **all the time.**

All the time, **God is good!**

Moment of Silence

Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer

(You are welcome to pray using the words below, or whatever words or version of this prayer is the most meaningful to you.)

**Our Creator in heaven,
hallowed be Your name.
Your realm come, Your 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 Yours is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

Prayer Response

"Come, O Long Expected Jesus"

#122 v. 1 & 2

***Come, O long expected Jesus, born to set all people free.
From our fears and sins release us; grant us your true liberty.***

***Israel's strength and consolation, hope to all the earth impart;
Dear desire of every nation, enter every longing heart.***

Offertory Invitation

Liturgist: We believe that even when we are discouraged giving out of our abundance and raising our voices for justice will offer us hope. We believe that even though this year has been a struggle grounding ourselves in gratitude and generosity reminds of what is good. We believe that even though our gifts are nowhere near enough to fix the problems of this world, God can multiply them together until they are enough.

Offertory Prayer

People: Holy One, this Advent season we wait in joy, and we give with joy. Joy for all you have given us; Joy because of your sacred promises. Receive these generous offerings, and use them to spread your joy in our world. Amen.

Closing Music

"O Holy Night"

Performed by Miranda Lin

Extinguish The Light

Benediction

Fellowship Time - Those who wish to stay and chat with others will be broken into small group breakouts to allow for more sustained conversation.

“Call to Worship” adapted from a prayer from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand, “Advent Wreath Lighting Prayer” and Worship Theme and Design adapted from Worship Design Studio by Marcia McFee. Used, adapted, and live-streamed with permission. www.worshipdesignstudio.com. “Invitation to Confession” adapted from work by Beth Merrill Neel. “Offertory Prayer” by Rev. Joanna Harader, from SpaciousFaith.com. Hymns and lyrics reprinted and streamed under ONE LICENSE # 724117-A. All Rights Reserved.

New to our Congregation or have questions? Please consider leaving us your contact information at <https://forms.gle/Rjicc2jdMmzCgCFh8>

Virtual Christmas Story Time and Cookies

Today, Sunday, December 13, 3:00 – 4:00pm

Settle in with your favorite Christmas cookies or treat to show, tell about and eat. Then listen to fellow UCCSV friends read fun Christmas stories aloud.

Zoom Link:

<https://zoom.us/j/97245814468?pwd=U2QzR2VaYXNXZTN3YWJXWWVwY1RoQT09>

If you would be interested in reading a favorite Christmas story or have any questions, please contact:

Deb Anderson

debralanderson57@gmail.com

or Madelyn Anderson madelyn.andersonfraley@gmail.com

Luminaria for Advent - A Church Wide Art Project

While we can't be together in person this Christmas and Advent we can still create together. We're asking people to make a luminaria as part of their Christmas preparations and take pictures of them and send them to HollyRJackson@gmail.com. Then they will be used in worship. Directions for how to make a luminaria are attached to this Spirit News. If you need bags or candles for the bags please email HollyRJackson@gmail.com and we will get them out to you.

Drive-by Christmas Lights

The Advent Planning Committee is pleased to announce the UCCSV Drive-by Christmas Lights activity. Please join us on Saturday, December 19th at 5 p.m. as we meet in the UCCSV parking lot before departing on a drive-through light show of participating households from the congregation.

The Drive-by Christmas Lights will kick-off with socially distanced merriment including hot apple cider and a photo opportunity in front of the church's new Christmas banner before departing on the drive-through light show at 5:30 p.m.

Those interested in adding their homes to the Drive-by Christmas Lights route should contact Camila Young at cespinapr@gmail.com and/or (240) 801-0412 by Monday, December 14th. Also, those with decorations in need of a helping hand in setting them up may contact Camila about that too, since Bryan is more than happy to help set up outdoor decorative displays.

The final Drive-by Christmas Lights route will be ready by December 15th for those who wish to see the lights, but cannot join us on the day of the drive-through. We hope to see you there!