You Are Welcome Here!

An “Open and Affirming” Congregation of the United Church of Christ in Germantown, MD
December 12, 2021

Travelers on the Journey:
Journey To Joy
10:00 a.m.

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
Pastor: Rev. Holly R. Jackson
Deacon: Jen Fuss
Advent Wreath Lighters: The Thomason Family
Ushers: Susan Pearcy & Dave Moore
Liturgist: Deb Anderson
Cantor: Catherine Benskin
Director of Music Ministry: Stefan Petrov
AV Technical Support: Patrick Jackson
Tellers: Heidi Harmon & Dave Moore

*Stand as you are able/Rise in body or spirit
Welcome & Announcements

Prelude  “In the Bleak Midwinter”  arr. J Martin

*Call to Worship
Liturgist:  We have lost our way.
People:  We feel distant from joy.
Liturgist:  We struggle with grief and sometimes feel numb.
People:  We join together to hold each other up, no matter our emotions.
Liturgist:  Holy God, help us find our way to you. Amen.

Advent Candle Lighting
Reader 1:  Every journey requires us to move towards a destination. Sometimes the trip begins to feel like a drag. We are tired. We are fearful. We just want to get there already. We need something to illuminate our path, to shine a light and bring us joy. Perhaps this is the day to stop for a moment, to smile at our fellow travelers, and to find sustenance in each other. As we light this candle of joy we pray that laughter helps sustain us on this trek. We look forward to smiling in the glow of a newborn babe who will show us once and for all just how much God loves us.

Reader 2:  God of Joy, light our way, make straight our paths, show us the way to find joy in the journey. Amen.

Advent Sung Response  “Won’t You Let Me Be Your Servant” #539 (v. 2 &3)
“We are pilgrims on a journey, we are travelers on the road;
We are here to help each other go the mile and bear the load.
I will hold the Christ-light for you in the shadow of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the Joy you long to hear.”

Invitation to Confession
Liturgist:  The church should be place where we can admit that we have lost our way. Where we can confess that we cannot find the right path. Where we acknowledge that we have not always treated our fellow travelers with love and care. Let us pray with our whole hearts, in silence and words, for we follow a God who longs to wipe away our tears, hold all our doubts, and fill us with overflowing joy. (A chime calls us to a moment of silence.)

Confession
People:  Merciful God, we confess that sometimes we aren’t sure what to feel. There is so much grief and pain in the world that joy can feel like a luxury we can’t afford. There are times we seek to numb our pain with destructive habits. Or we force joy, pretending like nothing is wrong. We
take our emotions out on others, wielding our anger, frustration, and anxiety like a sword. Instead of sitting with our emotions we let them dictate our actions. We do not act with love towards our neighbors or ourselves. Forgive us, God of Wonder and Joy. Remind us again of the gift of emotions that allow us to feel. Give us ways to experience joy and peace no matter what struggles we may be having. Let your mercy bring a smile to our faces and hope in our hearts. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon
Liturgist: The God of Joy has promised us that beyond all things there is goodness and comfort. No matter what is happening around us we can rest in the knowledge that we are forgiven and loved beyond measure. God has given us the gift of joy to get us through difficult moments when we struggle. Let us return to this knowledge again and again and find peace.

*Passing of the Peace*

*Hymn* “Of the Parent’s Heart Begotten” #118 v. 1 & 5

Message for All Ages

Hebrew Bible Scriptures Psalm 25:1-10; Isaiah 9:2-7
Sermon Rev. Holly R. Jackson
Hymn “With Joy Draw Water” #109 v. 1, 2, 3

Community Life and Concerns
(In-Person participants fill out prayer requests. Zoom participants 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   “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” #116 v. 1
Mission Moment    “Christmas Fund Offering” (video)

Invitation to the Offering
Liturgist: What will you give towards the journey we take here together? We can be cheerful givers no matter the difficulty of our circumstances. All that we have are God’s gifts joyfully shared with us. God encourages us to share those gifts with others so that our delight is multiplied. Let us give out of our abundance with joy in our hearts.

Prayer of Dedication
People: Generous God, you share so much with us. In those moment we offer up our gifts shared back to you. We smile in hope that you can take what we offer and multiply it to do your work of love and justice in our hearts and in the world. Let our giving truly make a difference and bring joy to others this day. Amen.

*Closing Hymn   “Joy to the World” #132 v. 1 & 2
*Benediction

Postlude   “Song Without Words” F. Mendelssohn

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Fellowship Time - After worship we will ask people to leave the building by the side and back doors and not to congregate inside in small groups. If people want to meet and greet after worship, they can do so outside on the side porch or in the parking lot.

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

Greeters and Liturgists are needed always! If you are available on Sundays, please consider signing up at UCC of Seneca Valley: UCCSV Worship Support (signupgenius.com)