

Faith United Church of Christ

*“An inclusive spiritual family shaping a better you for creating a better world.
A place to make a difference.”*

December 10, 2017

The 2nd Sunday of Advent

Sacred Fellowship 10:45 AM

We are delighted that you are here today! We hope you will find us an affirming, uplifting, and committed family of faith. Here we work to make everyone, without any exceptions, to feel accepted, inspired, and encouraged in their spiritual journey. In dialogue, we seek to understand. In encouragement, we seek to heal. In all things we yearn to live by love, for peace, with joy. This is a place where your intellect will be challenged, your heart will be nurtured, and your spirit refreshed. Varying beliefs are expressed openly and freely, and your doubts will not be suppressed. We trust that we are all, every person and part of creation, continuing to be blessed by God's grace; and that in community we can help each other to see this grace alive in our lives and relationships. We hope to share our gifts with you, even as we pray that you will want to share your gifts with us. Whoever you are and wherever you may be in your life's journey, we invite you to be a part of our lives and our spiritual home. Welcome!

POINTS TO PONDER

“A voice says, ‘Cry out!’ And I said, ‘What shall I cry?’ All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.... The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.”

— *Isaiah 40.6, 8*

“Isaiah took one look at all of this heathen splendor and pagan power and saw the fatal void at the heart of it all....‘Never mind,’ he must have mused, ‘how green and lush the grass may seem. Never mind how bright and picturesque the blossoming flowers may appear.’”

— *Rev. Gardner C. Taylor, The Words of Gardner Taylor, Volume 1*

“How does the image of a gentle shepherd speak to a world that tells us to succeed and to own and to acquire, to step on others and outlast them in order to reach our goals, to rely on military might for the nation's security and a gun in our home for our personal safety? How do faithful Christians reconcile the image of the shepherd with such a culture?”

— *Rev. Kathryn M. Matthews, ucc.org*

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who

are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

— *Marianne Williamson, A Return to Love*

"The life of faith, contrary to modern interpretations that make faith hollow, has little to do with our religious beliefs, and much more to do with our lived life. Those renowned for great faith overcome great obstacles, temptations, trials, and fears to put aside prudence and follow their spiritual ideals and ethical values. They frequently had to resist their society, and even their families, to do the right thing. They were too often lone voices in a world that saw things differently. They were not only not revered, but despised, for what they prophetically spoke and compassionately practiced. They knew they themselves were like grass, and that they would wither and fade. But they also knew that those in power were beset with the same fate. They often spoke against the abuses and corruption of empire, like Isaiah and the prophets, not because they believed they themselves could change the world; but only that the world needed to be changed. They practiced their convictions in faith – not that all would turn out well, but that life is devoid of real purpose without convictions that supersede pragmatism. For they understood that only thing will stand the test of time – not humans and humanity, but sacred values and divine principles."

— *Rev. Bret S. Myers, 12/7/2017*

CALLED TOGETHER AS SPIRITUAL FAMILY

Welcome and Announcements

*Please sign the registration pads at the ends of the pews on the center aisle.
We ask that you please shut off cell phones and practice quietness during the service.*

*Please join us for fellowship and refreshments after the worship
in Romig Hall (lower level of elevator or stairs).*

** = You are invited to stand as you are able*

Prelude Introit on "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" from Advent Suite Pietro Yon

Welcoming the Light of Love in Our Midst *(acolytes light altar candles)*

We prepare ourselves for communing with the sacred as love's light is brought into our awareness. The light of love burns within and among each of us, and we carry that light into our sanctuary; visually reminding us of the image of the divine that lives in our hearts, minds, and souls – and that we nourish through our faith-filled fellowship.

Affirming God's Presence in Us All "You Matter!"

***Hymn for Faithful Praise** "My Soul Gives Glory to My God" **#119**

***Centering Our Souls** "Faith as Preparation"

God of our ancestors who were nomads, foreigners, slaves, wanderers, leaders, followers, shepherds, farmers, prophets, judges, royalty, peasants, exiles, outcasts, and priests:

Remind us of the examples of those who were faithful to your word and will, and who prepared themselves for receiving what they believed by faith.

We know that we cannot prepare our lives for having faith except that we come to recognize that faith is a necessity when our knowledge is incapable of providing certainties. Faith is our choice – a choice by which we leap into the unknown; trusting that you, O God, will be there when we land.

We give you thanks for how you inspired the faithful in all times to trust in your way of love and peace, even when doing so was done at great sacrifice.

We want to trust even as they did. Lead us to be faithful people, and so may we act by faith even when we have doubts about the successfulness of the outcome.

May we, in living by faith, prepare ourselves in this time when there is not enough love and not enough peace for that time in which there will only be love and peace.

Give us the wisdom to know that the true test of faith is not whether we come to believe that the outcome will be successful, but that we will come to act as if it already is successful regardless of the outcome.

May our faith in the love and peace you reveal to us be the faith that guides all of our decisions, inspires all of our practices, and sustains us in all of our troubles.

May our faithfulness prepare us for the challenge of living lives of honor and integrity, ones in which our descendants will look to as their source of heritage and strength and say of us,

"We are thankful for our ancestors who prepared our way for living in the abundance of God's grace by their example of faithfulness."

Our Stories of Random Acts of Kindness & Intentional Deeds of Compassion

WE LISTEN FOR THE SACRED IN THE MIDST OF OUR LIVES

Advent Wreath Ceremony The Candle of Faith & Preparation

The Hammond Family: Jared, Margaret, William, Isabella

Prayers

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

Silent Meditation: The Prayers of the People

Pastoral Prayer

Unison Prayer “*Prayer from the New Zealand Book of Common Prayer*”

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. May it be so.

Children’s Christmas Program “Angels We Have Heard on High” *see insert*

WE DEDICATE OURSELVES TO GOD’S SERVICE THROUGH FAITHFULNESS

Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

“Generosity arises from gratitude like heat arises from fire. Like fire, gratitude is lovely to see; but when it warms others with generosity, that is when it becomes a true blessing.”

Offertory “Organ Improvisation”

****Song of Dedication***

Tune: Old Hundredth; p. 7

The advent of the Christ draws near.

With hope and faith we conquer fear.

Let love and peace in us be found.

Let joy within our hearts abound.

****Unison Prayer of Dedication***

O God, whose coming was tender and mild, but whose presence is empowering and passionate: We are thankful for the hope you inspire in our world where poverty is painful and loving-kindness is lacking. Jolt us with justice that the world’s prayers for peace may be answered. Jostle us with generosity that we may know the joy of giving. In this season of Advent, enter into our hearts that hope may arise within us to expect that which has been promised: that nourishment will be provided for the hungry...that comfort will call upon the suffering...that freedom will ensue for the

imprisoned...that justice will be imparted to the persecuted...that compassion will nurture the oppressed...that peace will pacify the violent...and that love will live in the midst of all peoples and creatures that you have declared good. May this gift of hope that you give to us be passed on to others by how we give of ourselves through our time, talents, tithes, and offerings. May it be so.

***Hymn of Mary's Faith**

"My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise"

#106

***Encouragement for the Journey**

This is the season of Advent, the season of something divine coming into the world.

Prepare yourselves for the divine to come into your life.

Hope for it; but more than that, expect it.

Look for ways in which the divine can find its way into you.

Then look for ways in which you can share the divine with others.

Love like you want to be loved. Forgive like you want to be forgiven.

Be the peace to others that you want for yourself.

Give such that others will call you generous.

Live such that others see the beauty of your Spirit.

Postlude Toccata on "Creator of the Stars of Night" from Advent Suite Pietro Yon

***The Light of Love Goes into the World**

Love's light is not extinguished from our worship, but is transferred from the flame of the candles to the passion in our hearts that we may go forth to let the light of love shine through us as we go to serve in the world!

WE GO FORTH AS PEACEMAKERS
TO CREATE JUSTICE FOR ALL

*Our worship is fulfilled, and our purpose is confirmed,
through our service as God's stewards to the world and all creation.*

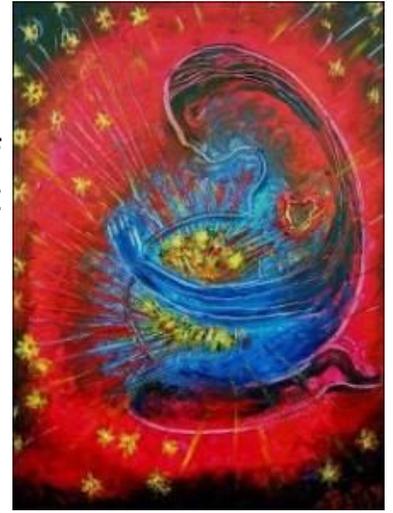
*Use the blessings God has given you as you share
the joy in your heart, the wisdom in your mind,
the love in your spirit, and the peace in your soul.*

Thank you for sharing sacred fellowship with us.

Nourishment for the Journey

We all want to feel the grace of God. We want the divine to come down from on high and dwell among and within us. But what if God's grace is not something to be doled out, but is rather the result of living a lifestyle of faithfulness? What if the incarnation is not something that happens to us, but happens in us?

So many theologies have accentuated how unworthy we are and how it is God's grace that shows us love despite how we have not merited that grace. But what if those theologians got it wrong? What if we are indeed created good, with a spark of divinity already living within us as an ember that only needs the breath of beautiful deeds to ignite a fire of faithful living? What if we are not as helpless and sinful as we have been told? What if Jesus was suggesting something much more empowering to us – perhaps that he does not need to save us as we can, by following in his ways, save ourselves? Is salvation professing him to be 'Lord,' or to live according to his ways? What if he meant his words, "Go and do likewise," and "You'll do even greater things than these," as injunctions to truly live good and righteous lives in accordance with the same virtues and values that he himself did?



Amidst a world of pervasive with the greed of consumerism, the violence of militarism, the quick-fixes of materialism, the contentions of competitiveness, the apathy of amoralism, and the resignation of cynicism, we wonder whether things will ever change. The forces of good seem weak compared to the forces of evil. We wish it could all just be dissolved and a new world order could embark in which there would be fairness, equality, justice, and peace for all.

But what if God is not going to just zap us all into shape? What if God really just wants us to, one by one, create lives in which would make for the things that would create the realities we most want? What if faith is less about belief, and more about practice? What if we are called to change our own lifestyles to conform to the vision that Isaiah, Jesus, and the other prophets encouraged us to live?

What are the values we need to be impregnated with in order to make way for the holy in our lives? Could we extend the love in our hearts for those we most care for to all people...to all creatures...to all creation? Could we incubate forgiveness in all of our relationships? Could we each individually give birth to non-violence in thought, word, and deed?

How might grace enter our lives if we became serious about following in the ways of Christ? How might we experience grace more extravagantly by becoming more faithful in our actions, and not just in our prayers?

The Psalmist writes: *"Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other."* What are we willing to do in this Advent Season, and for the rest of our lives, to welcome these divine realities into our lives?

May our Advent Season be filled with grace – the result of our preparedness to live by Christ’s values, and our faithfulness to exhibit Christ’s virtues by our lifestyles.

— Rev. Bret S. Myers, 12/3/2014

ADVENT

*What is coming we yearn to know
As fallen leaves herald winter snow
Will what comes be worth the wait?
Will past hungers our future sate?*

*How ironic it seems and bravely bold
To nurture faith and hope when earth grows cold
Hope defies reason’s expectation
While faith abides despite realization*

*Advent beckons us to neither sit nor slumber
Lest resignation our spirits encumber
Our hearts may slacken as cold winds blow
But peace is found when love does grow*

*With joy we celebrate what is not yet
In homage to the best in us, dare we forget
Welcome the sacred, the good, and the true
For frigid’s the soul that will not renew*

— Rev. Bret S. Myers, 12/7/2017

Faith UCC is an open and affirming church, embracing diversity in our congregation and community, and affirming the dignity and worth of every person. We are an inclusive community of faith that celebrates God's presence through worship and the sharing of God's word. We welcome all persons into the full life and ministry of the church, regardless of race, ethnic background, gender identity, sexual orientation, capability, or circumstance of life.

Our Ministry

Ministers — All the Congregation	Interim Pastor — Rev. Bret Myers
Trustee — Tom Daubert	Ushers — Tom Daubert
Liturgist — Children & Youth	Children’s Message — Children & Youth
Acolyte —	Nursery — Jean Frank, Michelle Barnard
Fellowship —	

Church Staff

Custodian — Scott Luzier
Organist—Mark Ferraguto

Church School Coordinator — Barbara Chellman
Choir Director – Mike Dolan
Administrative Assistant — Jeff Stormer

The liturgies for this morning's worship, along with the Song of Dedication, were written by Rev. Bret S. Myers except where otherwise noted.

Prayers for healing and wholeness:

Bob Ritzman, the family of June Brown, the family of Bill and Mary Jane Wild, the family of Jean Weller, Lisa B. (JoAnn's daughter), Brandon G., Lisa Neidigh, Bunnie Hartswick, Katelynn Wilson, Darlene Ripka, April S., Randy Brown (Aimee's Dad), the Piggot family, Robert Zupp (Eileen Pfaff's nephew), the Snook family.



Welcome to all first-time (and returning) guests to Faith UCC! We would like to get to know you and for you to get to know us. Join us after worship for coffee and **conversation**. There is free parking on Sundays at the meters and at the McAllister & Pugh Street parking garages – so, we hope you'll worship with us again next Sunday!

Electronic Giving Options: During the offering time in the service, you may place your offerings on the plates the ushers will bring around. If you prefer to give electronically simply **scan the QR code** with your smartphone to be directed to our online donation page.



December Special Offering

The **Christmas Fund** benefits retired clergy and their families that live on very limited incomes.

Make checks payable to Faith UCC with "Christmas Fund" noted in the memo line.



- December 1-17 SERRV Sale
- December 10 Second Sunday of Advent
- December 17 3rd Sunday of Advent
108th Annual Meeting, Noon
- December 18 Consistory Meeting 7 PM
- December 24 4th Sunday of Advent
Christmas Eve Service, 7 PM

Get In Touch with Us!

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Church Office Email: faithucc@comcast.net Pastor's Email: revbmyers@yahoo.com

Church Office Hours: 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Fridays

Please make an appointment with Rev. Myers if you would like to meet with the pastor.
You may call the church office, or his cell at 608-370-9472.