

# *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 23, 2018

**The 4<sup>th</sup> 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!*

## **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**

"From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"

M. Reger

### **Welcoming the Light of Love in Our Midst**

*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 of Joy & Celebration**

“Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”

**#129**

**\*Centering Our Souls**            “Litany of Expectant Joy”

You, O Spirit of the Divine, came to a young woman of lowly stature in the hinterlands of an empire:

**You remind us that goodness can find its way into our lives – no matter who we are, where we are from, or what the world may think of us.**

She gave birth to a child like any other, and yet she had a confidence that this child would be holy; and would grow up to liberate people from their bondage – physical, economic, political, emotional, and spiritual.

**He would be the saving grace for those most needing saved by grace – the poor, the oppressed, the weak, and the lowly.**

Shepherds were among the first to see the divine come into the world. They were heard the good news of an angel, and the music of the heavenly host: telling them that liberation was not as distant as anticipated, and that God’s values would be revealed in one who was flesh and blood just like them.

**The shepherds did not just listen. They went to see, and to bear witness to what they had heard in thumping in their hearts.**

They were able to see the sign of the divine in something as simple as an infant child, born in the most humble of circumstances.

**They had yearned and prayed for peace, but now they had come to expect it. Now they had come to have faith that peace was possible, and that goodwill could be shared among all humanity.**

Their expectant joy overflowed with the good news of God’s presence among them.

**We are not forgotten. God loves us and cares for us. God wants the best for us. God wants peace and goodwill to reign within us and between us. May God be praised!**

**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 Joy & Celebration  
*The Gerhart Family: Kate, Amanda, Mollie*

### **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.

**Our Church School Christmas Pageant**      “Just a Little Christmas”      **see inserts**

## **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 Christmas Expectation**

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

**#125**

## \*Encouragement for the Journey

Postlude

"Lo, How a Rose"

J. Brahms

## \*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.*

***Merry Christmas!***

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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

Ushers — Jane Lee Childs

Readers as noted

#### Church Staff

Custodian — Scott Luzier

Church School Coordinator — Barbara Chellman

Organist—Mark Ferraguto

Choir Director — Marinda Jenkins

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:**

Cyndi V.'s Family (mourning brother Steve), the family of Susie Keck, the family of Bunnie Hartswick, the family of JoAnn Edwards, Allen Killpatrick, K. Thompson, Ben and Louise Harris, Jane Sheckells, Dan and Eileen Pfaff, Lisa V. (John Vincenti's daughter), Brandon G., Lisa Neidigh, Katelynn Wilson, Darlene Ripka, April S., Randy Brown (Aimee's Dad), the Piggot's family.

*Prayer is the best  
wireless connection*

**The Advent Wreath**

The Advent wreath is richly symbolic. As a whole, it represents the universal Community of God. The wreath is in the shape of a circle in order to symbolize the eternal dimension of the love of God for all things at all times. A circle has no beginning and no end. There is no temporal or spatial beginning and end to the love of God. At all times, and for all things, God's love is ever-pervasive throughout all of creation.

The circle of the wreath also sets the boundary for all that is inside the circle. All that is necessary for the spiritual and moral life is contained within the circle. All other things are extraneous and may even be destructive. At the center of the circle is the white Christ candle — a symbol of purity, perfection, and wholeness. In it the many virtues become one virtue. Surrounding that candle are four other candles depicting the governing virtues necessary for living a life of purity and perfection in the Spirit of Christ: hope, faith, love, and joy. When all the candles are lit, they establish a glow of warmth and peace that lights the entire wreath. This symbolizes the harmony that exists between the virtues as well as their interdependence.

The flame of each candle represents the inspirational and motivational aspect of each governing virtue — individually, and for the whole. In having the passion for hope, faith, love, and joy we -through God's grace- provide spiritual and moral light for ourselves and also for others. Each candle is rooted in the midst of evergreen foliage. Evergreen foliage symbolizes the naturalness of living according to the virtues in one holy community of diverse individual parts. It also symbolizes the enduring and undying commitment necessary for living in this Community of God. Evergreen thus symbolizes life itself — the only life worth living: a life lived spiritually and morally. The Advent Wreath is thus an allegory of life within the Community of God.

--- Rev. Bret S. Myers



**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**

**Christmas Fund** (UCC) Provides direct financial assistance to retired and active United Church of Christ authorized ministers and lay employees and their surviving spouses, including pension and health premium supplementation, emergency assistance, and Christmas thank-you checks. A ministry of the Pension Boards, the offering is received annually on the Sunday before Christmas.

Make checks payable to Faith UCC with “Christmas Fund” noted in the memo line or on the offering envelope.

### **Calendar items now listed in Announcements**

### **Get In Touch with Us!**

Faith United Church of Christ 300 E. College Avenue State College, PA 16801  
Tel: (814) 237-3904 www.faithucc.info facebook.com/SCFaithUCC  
Church Office: faithucc@comcast.net Pastor's: revbmyers@yahoo.com

Church Office Hours: 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Tuesdays, Thursdays, & Fridays  
Pastor Bret's Office Hours: Tuesday 5-8 p.m., Wednesday 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Thursday 2-4 p.m.  
or other hours by appointment.

Appointments are recommended so as to give you the time you need without interruptions. You may call the church office, or his cell at 608-370-9472, or email him at revbmyers@yahoo.com.