

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 3, 2017

The 1st 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

"Rorate Caeli" Jeanne Demessieux

*Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just.
Let the earth be opened and send forth a Saviour.*

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!"

Sharing Christ's Peace

As a sign of our reconciliation with God and one another, greet and welcome those around you and share "the peace of Christ."

***Hymn for Hope**

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

#116

***Centering Our Souls**

O Divine Spirit that inspires our hopes, and confirms our expectations:

Keep us mindful of the blessing of hope itself – that hope, even unrealized, grants our lives meaning and purpose as we faithfully live with expectation that our hopes will eventually come true.

We know that Moses only saw the Promised Land from a distance without ever living in it, and that the prophets of old spoke of a peace they, and we, have yet to see.

Grant us encouragement to keep pressing on toward the fulfillment of our hopes for peace, justice, and love in this world – especially when circumstances give us every indication to the contrary.

Help us to see that no circumstance, no person, and no power on earth can ever take away our hopes and expectations. They live in our souls, and are immortal.

We are more than what we realize, and we are more than we accomplish. We are beings of spirit who hold on to hope in the direst and darkest happenstance.

We are infused with the indomitable divine image that will not let our hopes perish.

We, who hope, are the co-creators of that which we earnestly expect.

May the love, peace, and justice we all hope for become the values and virtues by which we live – thus giving our hopes a chance not only for survival, but for fulfillment.

In the name of the one who came into the world to offer new hope, Amen.

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 Hope & Expectation

A Time for All God's Children

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.

Choral Message “Songs and Readings of the Advent Season”

Traditional and new music, readings from Scripture, poetry, and prose,
all about the coming of Christmas

WE AFFIRM & CELEBRATE OUR UNITY
AS GOD’S CREATION

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

(As God calls all people to the table of forgiveness, peace, and loving fellowship, Faith UCC affirms an inclusive and open Communion Table. All persons (all ages, ethnicities, sexual orientations/identities, dis/abilities, religious affiliations, and other distinguishing features) are welcome to partake of this sacrament which affirms that we are all part of God’s family and are to commune together in sacred relationship. Love and peace are the uniting virtues of this spiritual meeting place. Therefore, all who wish to join in this ritual of unity are invited to do so providing that you do so in the spirit of peace and mutual love for one another.)

The Purpose of Holy Communion

God seeks to be in communion with us, and wills that we be in communion with one another. Through the Christ in Jesus, God drew closer to us by living among us with all the desires and temptations of being human, and showed us that we each have the power to overcome wrongdoing by the inspiration of our spiritual lives and the discipline of our physical lives; thereby effecting the Christ in us. Jesus represented the individual model of how we each can do this; and in calling to his side the disciples and followers in his way of love and peace, many of whom were ostracized by the wider society, he revealed how to model this in our community here on Earth.

Reminding us symbolically of this union of body and spirit, Jesus took a loaf of bread, broke it like we are often broken in our relationships with one another, and showed us the way to reconciliation by asking us to share our bread with one another in

remembrance of his own example. Through the broken bread, we participate in and become the body of Christ in the world.

In like manner, Jesus took the cup filled with the fruit of the vine, the vine that sustains us and links us to one another, and the fruit that nourishes the spirit of virtue that abides within and between each of us, and asked us to drink of that same spirit of loving-kindness and uniting harmony that was in him. Through the cup of blessing, we participate in and become the new life of Christ in the world.

The bread and fruit we partake nourishes us that we may nourish others. Through this sacrament of Holy Communion, we affirm that we are committed to Christ's way of love and peace by our motives, thoughts, actions, and practices in this world. We acknowledge that we are one community made by God, and that we must consciously choose, day by day, to be in right relationship with God, each other, and our sacred values. We therefore dedicate ourselves, individually and collectively, to make the Body and Spirit of Christ real in this world, here and now, and throughout our life as a community of the faithful. What we symbolize here in this holy space, we make real by our service when we go forth from this place.

Invitation

Christ invites "all" to the table of reconciliation – those who affirm their intrinsic worth, and those who are yet to do so...those whose hearts and minds are admirable, and those still struggling to make them so...those who are most like us, and those who are least like us. In the spirit of Christ, we at Faith United Church of Christ welcome you to share your spiritual journey with us as we share ours with you in a sacrament designed to bridge all differences in a spirit of extravagant welcome, of heartfelt openness, and of mutual loving-kindness. In coming together, let us recognize our responsibility in living in love and peace with one another and all creation so as to be joined together as one Holy Communion of Body and Spirit throughout this good earth.

Partaking of the Bread and Juice

(Please come forward by rows down the center aisle, taking a piece of bread, dipping it in the cup, eating, and returning to your seats by the side aisles. You may take additional elements with you to bring to those in your row unable to come forward, or we will have a server to bring the elements to any who cannot come forward. Grape juice is used, and gluten free bread is available upon request.)

Commissioning

Go forth with forgiveness, courage, faith, hope, love, peace, justice, kindness, and gentleness. May these virtues, representing the image of God in each one of us as was also manifested in Jesus, strengthen you to reach out in compassion as you nurture and aid others within this worldwide community. May the Spirit and grace of God be with you and among you. Amen

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 for Hope and Expectation**

“All Earth Is Waiting”

#121

***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

“Lo, How a Rose”

Johannes 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.

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

Trustee — Larry Bair

Liturgist — Tina Aumiller

Acolyte —

Fellowship — Jean Cole

Communion Stewards: Ernie Hawk, Susan Doran, Peggy Salamon, Clifton Merchant

Interim Pastor — Rev. Bret Myers

Ushers — Larry Bair

Children's Message —

Nursery — Jean Cole

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 3 First Sunday of Advent
- December 10 Second Sunday of Advent
- December 12 Trustee Meeting, 7 PM
- December 17 Third Sunday of Advent
108th Annual Meeting, Noon

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.