

ST. MATTHEW'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

November 29, 2020

"A faithful family reaching out to serve Christ"

First Sunday of Advent

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Renee Keiper

***CALL TO WORSHIP AND THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH**

The Bentley Family

(L) Some have said that the walls that divide us are impenetrable
and that the mountains of injustice are unmovable. Yet we hear another voice.

**(P) A mighty voice from heaven,
breaking the silence against the wicked forces of this world.**

(L) Behold, One is coming to whom all love, power, and glory belong.
No wall or mountain will be able to stand in his presence!

(P) We have gathered as testimony of Christ coming.

(L) Behold, God will answer you who are working and waiting for Christ!

**(P) We have gathered to remain vigilant in the work against
wickedness and injustice, as we anticipate Christ's coming.**

(L) Christ is near! With new hope do we light this candle,
singing new songs of Christ's revealed and revealing kingdom.

(P) We have gathered to share our song of hope with one another.

(L) Today our Advent wreath begins to shine as we light the first candle,
the Candle of Hope. Because God knows us and loves us and sends a savior
to lead us, we have confident hope for the future God is creating.
We can reflect the light of that good news to all we meet.

(First blue candle is lit.)

***OPENING PRAYER**

(L) Faithful God, your promises stand unshaken through all generations.
Renew us in hope, that we may be awake and alert
as we watch for the glorious return of Jesus Christ, our Judge and Savior,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **AMEN.**

***OPENING HYMN**

Advent Hymn

*And come Thou long awaited One in the fullness of Your love.
And loose this heart bound up by shame and I will never be the same.
So here I wait in hope of You. All my soul's longing through and through.
And Dayspring from on high, be near. And Daystar in my heart appear.*

*And dark and cheerless is the morn until Your love in me is born.
And joyless is the evening song until Emmanuel has come.
So here I wait in hope of You. All my soul's longing through and through.
And Dayspring from on high, be near. And Daystar in my heart appear.*

*So here I wait in hope of You. All my soul's longing through and through.
And Dayspring from on high, be near. And Daystar in my heart appear.*

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**God with us, even in Advent, we confess that you can seem far away.
You seem hidden when we need you near.**

**In our hurt, doubt, and fear, we do not try to draw closer to you;
instead, we lash out—against you, our neighbor, even those we love.**

Forgive us we pray and come to save us!

**Let your face shine until our tears are dried,
our sins are faded, and our hope is restored.**

**After all, we belong to you, and in your hands, we can be made new.
In Jesus' name we pray, AMEN.**

MOMENT OF SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

ACT OF PRAISE #198

*Good Christian friends rejoice with heart and soul and voice.
Now ye need not fear the grave, Jesus Christ was born to save.
Calls you one and calls you all to gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!*

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Staci Gower

THE READING OF SCRIPTURE

The Old Testament Lesson:

Renee Keiper

1 O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— **2** as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! **3** When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. **4** From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. **5** You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. **6** We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. **7** There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. **8** Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. **9** Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

The Gloria Tibi: *Glory be to thee, O Lord

*The Gospel Lesson:

24 "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, **25** and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. **26** Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. **27** Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

28 "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. **29** So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. **30** Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. **31** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. **32** "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. **33** Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. **34** It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. **35** Therefore,

keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, **36** or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. **37** And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

Laus Tibi: *Praise be to thee, O Christ

SERMON

Pastor JoAnne McGee

*HYMN

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God, my Father; There is no shadow of turning with Thee.

Thou changest not; Thy compassions, they fail not.

As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed Thy hand hath provided. Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter, springtime and harvest, Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,

Join with all nature in manifold witness To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed Thy hand hath provided. Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, Thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide.

Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow—

Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside!

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see;

All I have needed Thy hand hath provided. Great is Thy faithfulness,

Great is Thy faithfulness, Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see;

All I have needed Thy hand hath provided. Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

In life and in death we belong to God. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel, whom alone we worship and serve.

We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God. Jesus proclaimed the reign of God, preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives, teaching by word and deed and blessing the children, healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners and calling all to repent and believe the gospel. Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition, Jesus was crucified, suffering the depths of human pain and giving

his life for the sins of the world. God raised this Jesus from the dead, vindicating his sinless life, breaking the power of sin and evil, delivering us from death to life eternal. AMEN.

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Renee Keiper

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name, thy kingdom come, thy 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 thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. AMEN.

THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

*CLOSING HYMN *View the Present through the Promise*

*View the present through the promise, Christ will come again.
Trust despite the deepening darkness, Christ will come again.
Lift the world above its grieving through your watching and believing
In the hope past hope's conceiving: Christ will come again.*

*Probe the present with the promise, Christ will come again.
Let your daily actions witness, Christ will come again.
Let your loving and your giving and your justice and forgiving
Be a sign to all the living: Christ will come again..*

*Match the present to the promise, Christ will come again.
Make this hope your guiding premise, Christ will come again.
Pattern all you calculating and the world you are creating
To the advent you are waiting: Christ will come again.*

*CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE #152

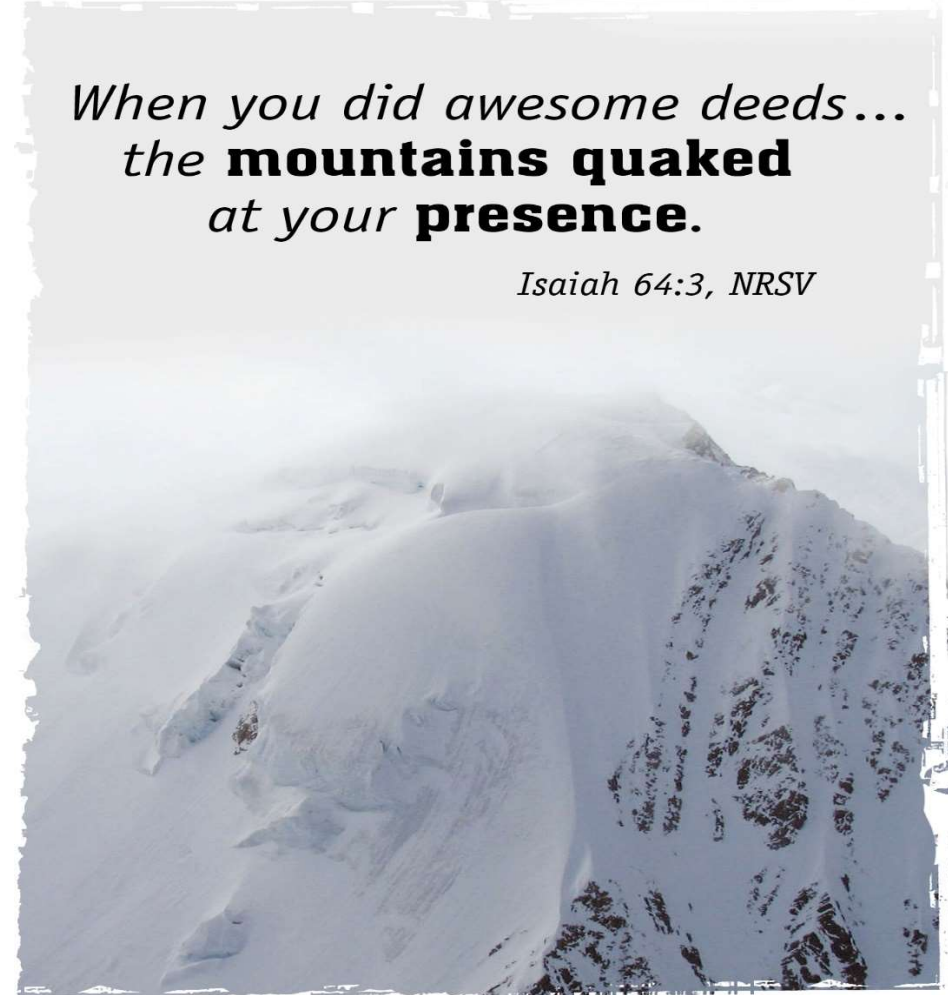
*Prepare the way, O Zion, your Christ is drawing near!
Let every hill and valley a level way appear.
Greet One who comes in glory, foretold in sacred story.
Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most holy name.*

*POSTLUDE

(*Please stand in body or spirit.)

*When you did awesome deeds...
the **mountains quaked**
at your **presence.***

Isaiah 64:3, NRSV



St. Matthews United Church of Christ

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Pastor: The Rev. Suzanne Brooks-Cope

Office Manager: Mrs. Rose Arace

Coordinator of Spiritual Formation: Mrs. Staci Gower

Music Director: Mr. Daniel Smale

Council President: Mr. George Huber

Sunday Worship, 9 AM; AM, Adult Sunday School, 10:30 am

Children's Sunday School is virtual on our website

www.stmattsucckunkletown.com



We begin a new church year today with the first Sunday of Advent. We watch for Jesus' advent, or coming, among us: his return on the last day, and his presence with us now. Welcome to worship.

This Week Ahead

Sunday, November 29	Worship First Sunday of Advent	-Sanctuary, 9 am -CIA Class, Stage 10:30 am
Monday, November 30	Exercise Group	-Office Open 9am-1 pm -Gathering Room, 1 pm
Wednesday, December 2	Exercise Group	-Office Open 9am-1pm -Gathering Room, 1 pm
Friday, December 4	Worship	-Office Open 9am-1pm -Sanctuary, Soc. Hall 9 am
Sunday, December 6	Annual Congregational Meeting Second Sunday of Advent	- Sanctuary, 10 am -CIA Class, Stage 10:30 am

Prayer Concerns

Bill Slawter, Eliza Dymond, Janet Gower, Rosemarie Stranahan, Alton and Lila Kleintop, Gladys Lindenmoyer, Erica Pozza, McCoy Rappa, Doug Hawk, Lee Sitler, Ralph Wunder, Lynda Edwards, Janet Fowler, Shirley Smith, Chapman and Mason Buskirk, Brayden Wunder, Kelly George, Kim Cope, Josh and Kevin Engler, Mae Borger, Marlette Palermo, Gladys Meixsell, George Keller, and the Families of Scott Madden, Loretta Hawk, Marlene Prutzman, Bobbie Christman, Franklin Smith and Linda Strohl

Today's Ushers:

Shirley Brotzman and Darryl Breinich

Next Week's Ushers:

Norm Burger, Shirley Brotzman, Henry Krechel, Jennie Rose Serfass, George Huber

Today's Acolyte: Jake Procita

Next Week's Acolyte: Katie Fritz

Have a wonderful and happy Thanksgiving!

Welcome to our pulpit Chaplain JoAnne McGee. JoAnne is currently the Associate Pastor for Congregational Care at Jordan UCC. She received her M. Div. from Lancaster Theological Seminary. She and her husband Joe have 3 children and 2 grandchildren (not to mention 3 rescued cats and a rescue dog.)

Thank you to all those who picked up Angel tags. Your gifts will be distributed to children through PVEN. Please bring back the "unwrapped" presents with tag attached by Friday, December 4 to the church office. Thank You.



Our Annual Congregational Meeting will take place next week at the close of worship on Dec. 6. The purpose will be two-fold—to approve the proposed budget and to elect three new council members for the Class of 2023.

Transmission of COVID19 is on the rise in our area. Don't forget to wear a mask at all times when inside the building and to keep 6 feet away from others not in your household! If you are not feeling well or running a fever, please stay home. Thank you for helping to keep each other safe.

We will have a "Blue Christmas" Service on Monday, December 14 at 7 pm for all those who are grieving or having a difficult time finding joy this Advent/Christmas season. It will be a service of prayer, candles and communion. We will worship in the Gathering Room.

Christmas Eve Plans: Currently, we are planning on having four Christmas Eve Services—3, 5, 7, 10 pm. We hope everyone who would like to attend a Christmas Eve service will be able to come to one of those services and be able to be seated in the sanctuary. **We ask that you call the church office and make a reservation.** We can only allow a maximum of 57 people in the sanctuary for each service—and that includes all participants. By Christmas Eve, our TV's should all be able to live stream for overflow. We ask that you reserve your spot in the sanctuary for one service only. These are the current plans—if we have to go to online worship, we will have a virtual 5 pm (lessons, carols and candlelight) and 7 pm (country gospel) service. All services will have communion so don't forget to bring bread and wine (juice).



2020 has been a difficult year. Many of us are ready to say goodbye and welcome in a New Year. Council is considering sponsoring a New Year's Eve Party in the Grove for our church family with campfires, a Watchnight Worship Service, refreshments, and possible line dancing. We would like to know if you would consider coming. Please let George Huber, Rose Arace, Diann Bittenbender, Renee Keiper, Randy Cramer or Pastor Suzanne know if you would be interested.