



**Sunday, January 4, 2026**  
**10:00 am Worship Service**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Christmas**

**Mission Statement:** Compelled by God's love and our faith in Jesus Christ, Unity Church, a diverse people of faith, seeks to realize God's dream for the world through worship, learning, giving, and serving.

**Core Values:** We love children. Serve Christ with courage. Embrace diversity. Nurture community. Be an advocate for justice and peace.

**Vision Statement:** We are called to Reach Up, Reach In and Reach Out

(302) 658-5288 [UnityChurchELCA@gmail.com](mailto:UnityChurchELCA@gmail.com)  
2101 Lancaster Avenue, Wilmington, DE 19805  
[www.unitywilmington.org](http://www.unitywilmington.org)

We invite you to contact Unity's staff members:

**The Rev. Brian K. Sanders, Lead Pastor**  
443-676-2239; [bks0808@aol.com](mailto:bks0808@aol.com)

**The Rev. Dr. Melissa P. Lemons, Pastor for Community Ministry**  
[melissalemons@gmail.com](mailto:melissalemons@gmail.com); 302-803-8866  
Office hours: by appointment

**Norwood Coleman, Jr., PhD, Music Director**  
**Mrs. Sharlene Drummond, Choir Director**

**YOU CAN ACCESS US ON SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 10:00AM ON YOUTUBE, UNITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, WILMINGTON, DE WITH THE CURRENT SUNDAY DATE. FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, USE LINK BELOW.**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN4vkddPnbKEzTKIFg-Lkvg>

**“Enter to Worship”**

\*Those who are able are invited to stand **\*\* Please, no walking or standing during this time. BOLD PRINT:** Congregation responds, P: Presider, A: Assisting Minister/Worship Leader. Where you see a <sup>†</sup>, you are invited to make the sign of the cross.

**THE GATHERING**

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

**PRAISE & WORSHIP**

**RINGING OF THE BELLS**

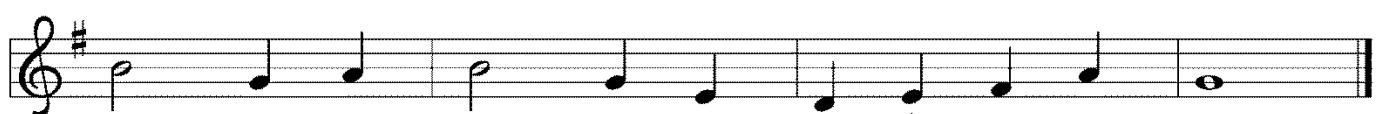
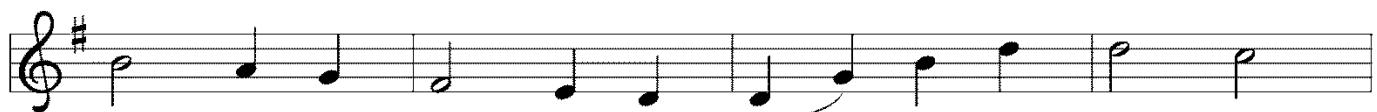
**Introduction**

A: Within the gospel reading's profound words lies the simple message that God is revealed in a human person. Though we may try to understand how the Word existed with God from the beginning of time, the wonder we celebrate at Christmas is that the Word continues to dwell among us. Christ comes among us in the gathered assembly, the scriptures, the waters of new birth, and the bread and the wine. Through these ordinary gifts we receive the fullness of God's grace and truth.

**OPENING HYMN- “BRIGHTEST AND BEST OF THE STARS” ELW**

**303 Please Stand**

## Brightest and Best of the Stars



Text: Reginald Heber, 1783–1826, alt.

Music: MORNING STAR, James P. Harding, 1850–1911, adapt.

## THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM (Please Stand)

Blessed be the holy Trinity, <sup>☩</sup> one God, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty Savior, Prince of Peace. **Amen.**

Trusting in God's steadfast love and faithfulness, let us confess our sin. *Silence is kept for reflection.*

Reconciling God, **we yearn for your presence to transform our grief, pain, and despair. We confess that we have not always prepared room in our hearts for your love; we have not always recognized your presence among us; we have not always embraced your message of peace. We cry out, weary with the burden of violence, oppression, and fear. We confess our failure to make room for those seeking refuge; our participation in violent systems that harm your innocent ones; our reluctance to embody your good news. Be born in us today and teach us to sing the joyful song of your salvation.**

**Amen.**

God's grace upon grace flows over you. <sup>☩</sup> Christ's presence redeems the whole creation. Your sins are forgiven. Let the earth rejoice and be glad! **Amen.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

A or P: Almighty God, **you have filled all the earth with the light of your incarnate Word. By your grace empower us to reflect your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

### WORD (Please be seated)

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song

## First Reading: Jeremiah 31:7-14

<sup>7</sup>Thus says the LORD:

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,  
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;  
proclaim, give praise, and say,  
"Save, O LORD, your people,  
the remnant of Israel."

<sup>8</sup>See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north  
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,  
among them the blind and the lame,  
those with child and those in labor together;  
a great company, they shall return here.

<sup>9</sup>With weeping they shall come,  
and with consolations I will lead them back;  
I will let them walk by brooks of water,  
in a straight path where they shall not stumble,  
for I have become a father to Israel,  
and Ephraim is my firstborn.

<sup>10</sup>Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,  
and declare it in the coastlands far away;  
say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him  
and will keep him as a shepherd does a flock."

<sup>11</sup>For the LORD has ransomed Jacob  
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.

<sup>12</sup>They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,  
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD,  
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,  
and over the young of the flock and the herd;  
their life shall become like a watered garden,  
and they shall never languish again.

<sup>13</sup>Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,  
and the young men and the old shall be merry.  
I will turn their mourning into joy;  
I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow.

<sup>14</sup>I will give the priests their fill of fatness,  
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the Lord.  
*The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.*

## Psalm: Psalm 147:12-20 (READ RESPONSIVELY)

<sup>12</sup> Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem;  
    praise your God, O Zion,

<sup>13</sup> **who has strengthened the bars of your gates  
    and has blessed your children within you.**

<sup>14</sup> God has established peace on your borders  
    and satisfies you with the finest wheat.

<sup>15</sup> **God sends out a command to the earth,  
    a word that runs very swiftly.**

<sup>16</sup> God gives snow like wool,  
    scattering frost like ashes.

<sup>17</sup> **God scatters hail like bread crumbs.  
    Who can stand against God's cold?**

<sup>18</sup> The LORD sends forth the word and melts them;  
    the wind blows, and the waters flow.

<sup>19</sup> **God declares the word to Jacob,  
    statutes and judgments to Israel.**

<sup>20</sup> The LORD has not done so to any other nation;  
    they do not know God's judgments. Hallelujah!

## Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. <sup>5</sup> He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of

his will,<sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace<sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight<sup>9</sup> he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ,<sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.<sup>11</sup> In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will,<sup>12</sup> so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.<sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit;<sup>14</sup> this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

*The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.***

### **\*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (Please Stand)**

**P:** Please stand for the reading of the Holy Gospel.

The musical notation consists of two staves of music in G clef, common time, and a key signature of one flat. The first staff contains the lyrics 'Al - le - lu - ia.' and 'Lord, to whom shall we go?'. The second staff contains the lyrics 'You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.' The music features various note values including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

### **GOSPEL**

**P:** The Holy Gospel according to: **JOHN 1:[1-9] 10-18**

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

[<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into

being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.]

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup>(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ") <sup>16</sup>From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup>The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

The Gospel of our Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **HYMN OF THE DAY – “LORD, PREPARE ME TO BE A SANCTUARY” UNITY SONG BOOK #12**

**LORD, PREPARE ME TO BE A SANCTUARY  
PURE AND HOLY, TRIED AND TRUE  
WITH THANKSGIVING, I’LL BE A LIVING  
SANCTUARY FOR YOU.**

**LEAD ME, O LORD, FROM TEMPTATION  
PURIFY ME FROM WITHIN  
FILL MY HEART WITH YOUR HOLY SPIRIT  
TAKE AWAY ALL MY SINS.**

# SERMON

Pastor Brian Sanders

Notes...

## APOSTLES CREED (Please Stand)

**C: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell.\* On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

\*Or, "he descended to the dead," another translation of this text in widespread use.  
From [sundaysandseasons.com](http://sundaysandseasons.com).

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION (Please sit, stand or kneel)

A: Empowered by the news of Christ's birth, let us pray boldly for the church, creation, and all who are in need. *A brief silence.*

O God, you reveal yourself wherever two or three are gathered in your name. Be with us now, not only in the infant Jesus and resurrected Christ, but in the beloved people of this assembly. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You reveal yourself in the waters of the womb; in brooks, ponds, and oceans; and in the waters of baptism. Grant us wisdom to tenderly care for the earth as a garden watered by your grace. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You reveal yourself in blessed diversity. Help us to look for you in people near and far, in bodies of all kinds, and in kindred young and old. Let us seek you in many places, praising you in many tongues. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You reveal yourself in new life. Support those beginning a new job, a new relationship, or a new living situation, especially those displaced because of tragedy or loss. Be with all others who need your life-giving touch this day (*especially*). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**  
You reveal yourself in holy communion. Sustain all who provide food and fellowship in this congregation and in the wider community. Make our tables signs of your welcoming presence among us. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

You promise to turn mourning into joy and to comfort those who weep. We remember those who have died and look to being united with them in your glory. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

## MEAL

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

## PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always

C: **And also with you.** Please share a sign of Christ's peace.

## OFFERING (God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Cor. 9:7, 8)

*(During the offering, the ushers will pass the offering plates moving from back to front while a musical selection is played. Then the congregation will sing the Offertory hymn printed below.)*

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -

new a right spir - it with - in me.

Cast me not a - way from your pres - ence, and take not your

Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re -

store to me the joy of your sal - va - tion, and up -

hold me with your free Spir - it.

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -

new a right spir - it with - in me.

## OFFERING PRAYER

A: God of glory, **great are your wonders among us and many are the blessings you bestow. Use us and these your gifts for the needs of the world, that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in your saving grace, through Christ our Savior.**  
**Amen.**

**PLEASE BE SEATED.**

## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

P: The Lord be with you

P: Lift up your hearts.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

*All are welcome to communion*

**C: And also with you.**

**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me. We remember and proclaim the mystery of faith: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

With this bread and cup we remember your Word dwelling among us,

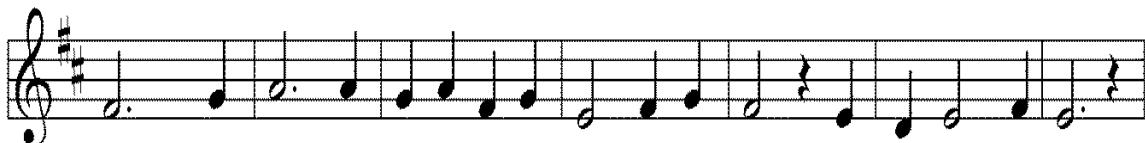
full of grace and truth. We remember our new birth in Christ's death and resurrection. We look with hope for the Lord's coming and ask... **Come, Lord Jesus. Come Holy Spirit. Amen**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

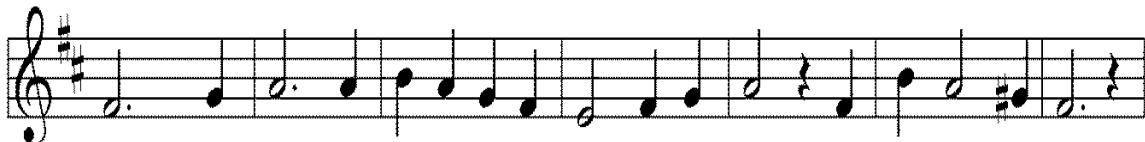
**P:** Gathered as one by the Holy Spirit, we pray as Jesus taught us:  
*(Alternate/modern versions of prayer in This Far by Faith p. 3, WOV p. 39)*  
**C:** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

**P:** God is now in flesh appearing. Come to the feast of joy!



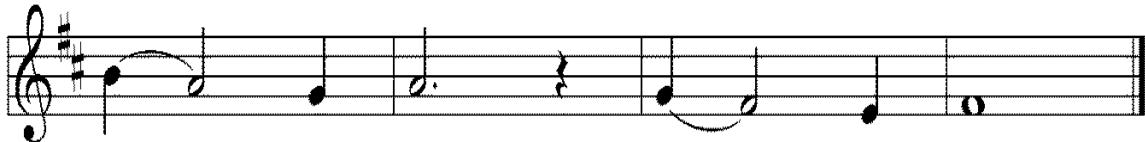
**C** Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world;



grant us peace, grant us peace.

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

**A & C: Incarnate God, you are among us at this table.  
May we treasure this gift and ponder in our hearts  
the mystery of your presence. Move us to discover  
the wonders of your love in the everyday moments  
of our lives, through Christ born in us. Amen.**

## THE SENDING

*God blesses us and sends us to minister to the world.*

## BLESSING

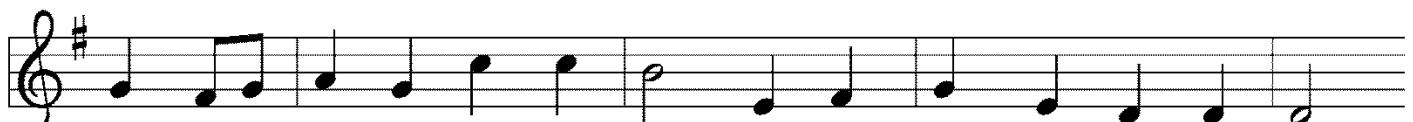
P: The triune God, glorious Mystery, holy Incarnate One,  
abiding Comforter, <sup>☩</sup> bless you with endless grace, peace, and joy.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN- “AS WITH GLADNESS MEN OF OLD” ELW 302**  
**Please Stand**

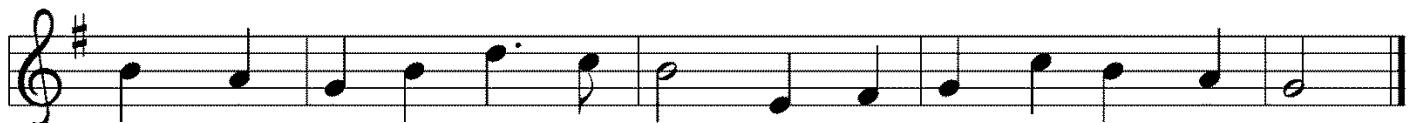
## As with Gladness Men of Old



1 As with glad - ness men of old did the guid-ing star be - hold;  
2 As with joy - ful steps they sped, Sav - ior, to thy low - ly bed,  
3 As they of - fered gifts most rare at thy cra - dle, rude and bare,  
4 Ho - ly Je - sus, ev - 'ry day keep us in the nar - row way;  
5 In the heav'n-ly coun - try bright need they no cre - a - ted light;



as with joy they hailed its light, lead - ing on - ward, beam-ing bright;  
there to bend the knee be - fore thee, whom heav'n and earth a - dore;  
so may we with ho - ly joy, pure and free from sin's al - loy,  
and when earth-ly things are past, bring our ran - somed souls at last  
thou its light, its joy, its crown, thou its sun which goes not down;



so, most gracious Lord, may we ev - er - more be led by thee.  
so may we with will - ing feet ev - er seek thy mer - cy seat.  
all our cost-liest trea - sures bring, Christ, to thee, our heav'n-ly king.  
where they need no star to guide, where no clouds thy glo - ry hide.  
there for - ev - er may we sing al - le - lu - ias to our king.

Text: William C. Dix, 1837–1898, alt.  
Music: DIX, Conrad Kocher, 1786–1872

## DISMISSAL

A: Glory to God in the highest!  
**And peace to God's people on earth!**

Go in joy. Embody God's redeeming grace. **Thanks be to God.**

**“Let us exit to serve”**

*We are called to reach up, reach in, and reach out.....*

**IF YOU HAVE ANYONE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD TO THE PRAYER LIST, PLEASE CALL THE CHURCH OFFICE @ 302-658-5288. NAMES WILL REMAIN ON THE PRAYER LIST FOR 3 MONTHS, UNLESS YOU REQUEST LONGER. PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE to MAKE ADDITIONS – (302) 658-5288.**

**THIS WEEK WE ASK THAT YOU KEEP THE FOLLOWING IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS:**

**UNITY CHURCH  
DEBBIE SWAN  
NORMAN GARRETT  
TYLER ALEXANDER  
BILL ELLSWORTH  
REV. LORRAINE  
DRANE JONES  
FRAN RODRIQUEZ**

**PASTOR BRIAN SANDERS  
PASTOR CLARENCE PETTIT  
SPENCER DRUMMOND  
CURTIS JACKSON  
NANCY ELLSWORTH  
RUTH JOE  
ROB FISHER  
BONNIE FISHER**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS – Birthdays, Anniversaries, Visitors**  
**WE WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME ALL VISITORS TO UNITY THIS MORNING.**  
**IT IS SO GOOD TO HAVE YOU AND PLEASE COME AGAIN.**

**TODAY,** we will have a special offering to allow all to give generously, giving thanks and praising our Lord for all our blessings. There are blank envelopes at the back of the church for your use. Thank you!

**WORSHIP & MUSIC COMMITTEE** will meet on Sunday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, in the Weiser Room, immediately following morning worship.

**CHRISTMAS TREE & DECORATIONS** will be taken down on Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, immediately following morning worship. Please stay to help. We sincerely appreciate it. Thank you!

**PUB THEOLOGY** – is held on the third Sunday of each month. We meet in the Weiser Room, have lunch and hold a lively discussion centering around everyday life. It is quite interesting and everyone is invited is invited to attend. In January, we will meet on Sunday, January 18<sup>th</sup>.

**SUNDAY COFFEE HOUR/FELLOWSHIP** is held in the Narthex immediately following morning worship and all are invited to attend. If anyone is interested in hosting one Sunday, please contact Rev. Lorraine @ (302) 383-9755.

**PRIVATE PRAYERS** – If you would like extra prayer time, you are welcome to stay at the altar after you have had communion.

**WEEKLY ZUMBA CLASSES** – These classes are held in Luther Hall immediately following morning worship. Please come and participant. Everyone is invited to attend for a fun, healthy activity, and there is a free-will offering.

**Dementia Caregiver Support Group:** 2nd Thursday of the month, 6-7:30pm. Contact Rev. Brain Sanders for more info.

**Prayer:** Anyone interested in 30 minutes of presenting prayer leads is invited to join our Prayer Line every Monday evening at 6:30-7:00 pm. Dial 1-240-591-0390, 315-704#.

**Volunteers needed:** Readers (lectors), Assisting Ministers (Worship leaders), Communion Assistants and Altar Guild. Please consider helping out in this capacity. Also, we need a volunteer liaison for the Boy Scouts to replace Bob Mazzoni. See Carol Egan for more info.

**Council Vacancies:** There are several open positions on Unity Church Council – volunteers needed to oversee Education, Hospitality, and Stewardship Committees; as well as anyone with accounting or bookkeeping skills to assist the Treasurer. See Rob Snowden or Pastor Sanders.

**Offering/Giving:** An alternative way to contribute to Unity is to set up VANCO on your mobile phone by texting (844)794-0738 and follow directions to donate by credit card. There is a “donate now” button on our Website which is [www.unitywilmington.org](http://www.unitywilmington.org)

**Spiritual Direction/Companionship:** If you'd like to talk individually about your faith life and how God shows up for you, contact Pr. Melissa. Sessions are free for Unity members (normally \$50 per hour). Companions usually meet once a month.

**Bible Study** meets every Wednesday evening at 7:00 via Zoom. Please access Zoom as follows:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87206052414?pwd=cWxnSnJodFE5S3hObzQrVGdMWGwwUT09>

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,87206052414#....0#,,717690# US (Wash, DC)

**Meeting ID: 872 0605 2414**

**Passcode: 717690**



