



To share faith, hope & love with all  
**First Congregational Church**

**United Church of Christ**

36363 Center Ridge Rd., North Ridgeville, OH 44039  
440-327-2921 ~ [www.fccalive.org](http://www.fccalive.org)



**December 15, 2024**

**No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey,  
you are welcome here.**

**If you would like to know more about our church, please contact us at [info@fccalive.org](mailto:info@fccalive.org)**

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Liturgy inspiration this week has come from *Enfleshed's Liturgy that Matters* project and the *UCC's Christmas Fund Advent offerings*.

**God is still  
speaking,**



**COME LISTEN**

# SERVICE of WORSHIP AND PRAISE

## Third Sunday of Advent

*\*Indicates "All who are comfortable, please rise in body or spirit"*

### **WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE**

**Prelude** "What Child Is This?" English melody, arr. Joel Raney

### **Ringing of the Bell**

### **Welcome and Announcements**

**Choral Introit** "O Come, All Ye Faithful" refrain

### **\*Call to Worship**

One: Rejoice!

**All: for the inbreaking of the Holy is found in humble places;**

One: it meets those who are weary and in need of wonder.

**All: Rejoice!**

One: for the Holy guides us when we feel lost;

**All: it is a bright star in a directionless night.**

One: Rejoice!

**All: Holiness is found for those who seek Her—**

One: thanks be to babies and children who remind us

**All: that the Holy is found in the present moment.**

One: Rejoice!

**All: for we are casting out, discarding, crumbling old ways**

One: that keep us from the Kin-dom of heaven in the here and now.

**All: God is near!**

One: Let us rejoice!

**\*Opening Hymn** #136 "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"

### **\*Passing of the Peace**

### **\*Prayer of Confession** *(in unison)*

Loving God, Creator of Wonder and Delight, we have fallen into the crevices of worry. We have allowed the preoccupation of what was said in the past and will happen in the future to distract us from embodying joy in the present. Clear a pathway to our souls so that we can find levity and delight again. May we find ways from the chasms of concern to the daylight of hopefulness.

### **\*Words of Assurance** *(in unison)*

The blessedness of God's grace fills our hearts with a peace-filled joy as we move through this season and follow the light ahead. Amen.

***WE HEAR GOD'S WORD***

**Litany of the Advent Candle (Joy)**

The Moyseenko Family

One: Divine Delight, in you we are gifted the wonder of joy.

**All: We praise you for joy's abundance all over creation.**

One: It is there in a baby elephant playing in ocean waves, a family pet's greeting upon their return home, a bear relaxing in someone's backyard hammock.

**All: And joy time travels, too. It is present in fond memories and excitement for future possibilities.**

One: Yet, in times when we find ourselves feeling far from joy, how might this Advent wreath accompany us in such moments?

**All: Perhaps it is in the simple act of lighting a candle together as a community, around the possibility of joy.**

One: Perhaps it is in kindling it through noticing even the slightest warmth touch our heart when we witness joy in others. So let us gather around and light this candle with God's cosmic light,

**All: a light that bends and moves and fills beyond the joy that we thought was full. Amen.**

**Scripture Reading** Luke 3:7-18

<sup>7</sup> John said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, "You pack of snakes! Who warned you to escape the wrath to come?" <sup>8</sup> Produce good fruit as a sign of your repentance. And don't presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Sarah and Abraham as our mother and father,' for I tell you that God can raise children for Sarah and Abraham from these very stones. <sup>9</sup> The ax is already laid at the root of the tree; every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and tossed into the fire." <sup>10</sup> When the people asked him, "What should we do?" <sup>11</sup> John replied, "Let the one with two coats share with the one who has none. Let those who have food do the same." <sup>12</sup> Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to John, "Teacher, what are we to do?" <sup>13</sup> John answered them, "Exact nothing over and above your fixed amount." <sup>14</sup> Soldiers likewise asked, "What about us?" John told them, "Don't bully anyone. Don't accuse anyone falsely. Be content with your pay." <sup>15</sup> The people were full of anticipation, wondering in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. <sup>16</sup> John answered them all by saying, "I am baptizing you in water, but someone is coming who is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not fit to untie! This One will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire. <sup>17</sup> A winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear the threshing floor and gather the wheat into the granary, but the chaff will be burnt in unquenchable fire." <sup>18</sup> Using exhortations like this, John proclaimed the Good News to the people.

One: The Word that is a lamp to our feet and a light unto our path.

**All: Thanks be to God who is still speaking.**

**\*Gloria Patri**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.

**Sermon**

Pastor Kearstin (she/her)

**\*Hymn of the Day** #133 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"  
*Deacons will collect prayer request cards during this hymn.*

***WE RESPOND IN PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING***

**Prayers of the People & Pastoral Prayer**

**The Lord's Prayer** *You are invited to pray in the language & tradition of your choice.*

*Our Father/Creator, 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 debts/trespasses.  
As we forgive our debtors/those who trespass against us,  
and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil,  
for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.*

**Prayer Response** "In the Bleak Midwinter" vs. 4

**Words of Offering**

Poet Audre Lorde says, "The sharing of joy... forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them and lessens the threat of their difference." Let us bring forth our gifts with joyful spirits this Advent season. For we are alike, my friends, in our desires—love, liberation, and peace. Come.

**Offertory** "Away in a Manger" arr. Suzanne Brantley

**\*Doxology**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, ye heavenly host:  
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

**\*Prayer of Dedication** *(in unison)*

To our shared joy we dedicate our offerings, oh God of Delight. To those looking for a sign, a star, a way, a place to stay – may every one of their needs be met. May we all take pleasure in the abundance that is found in mutuality. God of Wonderful Enoughness, God of Laughter and Dance, bless our shared resources to your Kin-dom of Beautiful Interdependence. Amen.

***WE GO TO SERVE***

**\*Sending Hymn** #20 "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"

**\*Taking the Light into the World**

**\*Benediction** *Take a posture of openness that feels good for you and receive this blessing.*

Go forth – yes, even amidst the sorrow of the world – making a way for joy. For the Holy lives in the deep blue of the night and the shimmering of the star. Go with God – our Accomplice, our Delight, our Hope. Go blessed, Beloveds.

**Choral Benediction** “Prepare the Way of the Lord”

**Postlude** “The Shepherds Praised Him Very Much” - Walcha

**REMINDER:**

**All donations for 2024 MUST be turned in by December 31 to be applied to your 2024 giving statement.**

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**Announcements**

**Mini Advent Workshop:** Join Christian Education for our mini-Advent workshop **TODAY** after the worship service. We hope that everyone will stay for our “Cookies and Hot Cocoa Bar” coffee hour and help decorate luminaries to be used for the music concert tonight and on Christmas Eve. There will also be Advent crafts around Fellowship Hall to do!

**Holiday Music Festival:** Please join us **TONIGHT at 7:00 p.m.** for our Christmas Music Festival. There will be performances by our chancel choir, hand bells, guests, solos, and combinations of those. There will be carols and other favorite Christmas songs sung by all. This will be a great way for all of us to immerse ourselves in the Advent season with reverence, joy, and celebration. We hope to see you there, showing your support for our music department, as you generously support all of our numerous church projects. A reception will follow the festival.

**Advent Bible Study:** Join Pastor Kearstin on December 17 for an Advent bible study called “On Earth as it is in Heaven.” There will be two cohorts for class: an in-person group who will meet at the church at 11 am and an online group who will gather on Google Meet at 7 pm. Together we will explore the cosmos and the advent story, the Zodiacal calendar and the Liturgical calendar, as well as astrology and mythology. Did you know that in the early church, there was quite a bit of overlap of Jesus-followers and those learning about astrology? Our time together will provide a cosmic perspective of the Advent story for those who are interested.

**Blue Christmas & Christmas Eve:** For those struggling with grief and loss, we’ll hold a special **Blue Christmas Service** on the Winter Solstice, **December 21**, at 7 pm. And we will have two **Christmas Eve services** this year: the first will be **in-person** at the church at **7 pm**, and the second will be on **Facebook Live** at **11 pm**.

**Annual Reports Due:** All annual reports of the church boards and committees must be turned into the office before January 10 for the Annual Meeting on January 19.

**2025 Offering Envelopes:** Offering envelopes are available for those who pledged for 2025. They are on the table in the narthex.

***Help Wanted: Custodial position:*** 5 hours per week with additional 4 hours per week May through October for lawn care & groundskeeping. Regular duties include but are not limited to sweeping & mopping fellowship hall floors; setting up & taking down tables & chairs for coffee hour; keeping entryways and walkways clear of leaves, snow & ice; make repairs as needed; set up & take down and be on-site representative for all non-church member rentals\* (additional pay for rentals). Must be able to lift 50#. Contact Roy Dreger, Jack Fitts or church office.

**Pastor**

Rev. Kearstin Bailey

[info@fccalive.org](mailto:info@fccalive.org)

**Christian Ed Director**

Mary Karlovec

[www.fccalive.org](http://www.fccalive.org)

**Music Director**

Barb Habecker

<https://www.facebook.com/firstconqucncr>

**This Week's Events**

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|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Today   | Third Sunday of Advent<br>Worship service, 10:30 am<br>Mini Advent workshop & cookies and hot cocoa bar, after worship service<br>Christmas Music Festival, 7 pm (reception afterwards) |
| Dec. 16 | Newsletter articles due<br>Women's book club, 7 pm                                                                                                                                      |
| Dec. 17 | Advent bible study, 11 am at church, 7 pm on Google Meet                                                                                                                                |
| Dec. 18 | <del>Handbell practice, 6:30 pm</del><br>Choir practice, 7:30 pm                                                                                                                        |
| Dec. 21 | Blue Christmas service, 7 pm                                                                                                                                                            |
| Dec. 22 | Fourth Sunday of Advent<br>Worship service, 10:30 am<br>Fellowship hour, after worship service                                                                                          |

