



Moving with Mary's Song

St. John's United Church of Christ
An "Open and Affirming" Congregation
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Rev. Alice Rauch, Pastor

The Service: 10:00 a.m.

December 22, 2024

(Let us be silent and prayerful as we prepare ourselves for worship.)

MISSION STATEMENT OF ST. JOHN'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Remembering that God calls us through Christ to be ministers with each other, St. John's United Church of Christ, as inspired and directed by the Holy Spirit, seeks: To be inclusive and accessible to all people; To provide loving service to all of God's people through mission and ministry; To strive for righteousness, justice, and peace.

Rooted in tradition, progressive in our outlook.

Prelude

Announcements and Prayer Concerns

Light for the Journey - Advent Candle lighting

We Travel to Nazareth

You are invited to rise in body and/or spirit as the fourth Advent candle is lit.

O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

We're on our way, We're on our way
Dream of the day
When love holds sway
With all the earth
In all our hearts
We're on our way
This is the day.

The journey continues, and this candle will help light our way.

We are on our way to more love.

So many are in need of grace, in need of loving acceptance.

We are a people who can bring Good News.

Stories of generosity are markers and signs that goodness is the nature of God.

God's light goes before us, we are not alone.

Response: We're on our way, We're on our way, Dream of the day. When love holds sway, With all the earth In all our hearts, We're on our way. This is the day.

Opening Prayer and Words of Assurance - Holy and Living God, we pray for hearts and minds to open wide to merciful acts in Your name. Too often, we clench our fists in fear that what we have will not be enough for us. Give us the humility to make more room. Call us to a "generosity of grace." Call us to be generous—not to a fault—but to a future where all have a place and a home where they are deeply loved. We pray this in the name of Your Son, Jesus, the Christ, Your Love Incarnate. Amen.

Let this be a marker of assurance that we are moving in a faithful direction: God is with us every step of our way toward the Love of Bethlehem. Jesus is being born into our lives even now. The Spirit is transforming us in this place.

JESUS KNOWS US EACH BY NAME

Jesus Loves Me

#327

BLANKETED BY GRACE

A REMINDER

*Hymn

“Joy to the World”

#132

*Benediction

*Benediction Response:

**O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray,
cast our our fear, and draw us near; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.**

**We're on our way, We're on our way, Dream of the day When peace holds sway, With all the
earth, In all our hearts, We're on our way, This is the day.**

Postlude

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

(Please contact the church office, at 570-523-0162, with any updates)

Ongoing Needs- Ann Albee, Anna Brouse, Betty Hackenberg, Jean Hartman, Kristian K., Christine Sartwell, Leslie Shearer, Joanne Stahley, Linda Williams, Wayne Williams, Rev. Sharon Von Blohn.

Mostly Homebound- Ann Beasom, Richard Berry, Peg Brouse, Bill & Lola Fuller, Ken Moore, Ethel Moser, Ann Louise Snyder.

Immediate Concerns - Ed Crow, Andrew Derr, Bill Geyer, Craig Hoffman, John Marshal, Pam Mabus, Sue Miller, Todd O'Neil, Alice Savidge, Dianna Spickler, The Family of Jim Spidle, Renee St. Clair, Craig Stumpff, Cyndi Weaver.

CHANCEL FLOWERS - are given by Janet & Mike Roberts in celebration of their 52nd wedding anniversary!

THIS MORNING

St. John's is pleased you have joined with us today. We hope that you have found this time to be a blessing. **Please sign** the attendance book located in the Narthex (and kindly include your mailing address/telephone number and/or email) or fill out a Welcome Card (located on the Welcome Table in the Narthex) and introduce yourself to the persons who are worshipping around you. If you are looking for a new church family and are interested in knowing more about St. John's, please indicate that following worship to the Pastor or one of the ushers.

THIS WEEK

Monday, December 23	4 pm	ADVENT BOOK STUDY (GP)
Tuesday, December 24	6 pm 6:15 pm 7 pm	BELL CHOIR (SANCT) CHANCEL CHOIR (CH.RM.) CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE
Wednesday, December 25	12:00 pm	MERRY CHRISTMAS! CHRISTMAS DAY DINNER (FH)
Thursday, December 26	OFFICE CLOSED 8:30 am 9 am 1:30 pm 7 pm	OFFICE CLOSED WW (FH) TOPS (CR) Trailside Troubadours (FH) Women's Barbershop (CH.RM.)
Friday, December 27	OFFICE CLOSED	OFFICE CLOSED
Saturday December 28		
Sunday, December 29	10 am	WORSHIP, CHILDREN'S CHURCH

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 22, 2024

Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

Moving with Mary's Song

A bit of trivia on this the fourth Sunday of Advent. What's one of the earliest Advent hymns ever to be recorded? (Hint: It's found in today's reading from Luke.)

It's Mary's song of praise, also known as The Magnificat, which is Latin for "my soul magnifies the Lord."

Mary, the teen betrothed to Joseph, whose life has been turned upside down when an angel tells her she has found favor with God and will bear a son, goes to visit her cousin, Elizabeth. Elizabeth is also with child, carrying the wilderness wandering baptizer, John.

When the two women meet, the child in Elizabeth's womb leaps with joy and she says to Mary, "Blessed are you among women!"

Such a greeting would lead any person to break out in song — as Mary does. But her words are not the maternal sentiments one might expect. Rather, 20th-century German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis for his role in speaking out against Hitler, described Mary's song as, "the most passionate, the wildest, most revolutionary Advent hymn ever sung."

This is no meek and mild Mary cast in the glow of heavenly light that we see on Christmas cards. This, says Bonhoeffer, is "the passionate and enthusiastic Mary who speaks out there."

Mary's song reminds us just what Christmas — this Christ moment — is all about. She sings of God who fills the hungry with good things. She sings of God who sends the rich away empty. She sings to the One who lifts the lowly — to the One who does great things through people like her who are often deemed unworthy.

Sadly, we live in a world where the lowly still get pushed to the side, silenced and ignored. But as Advent comes to an end — and soon we will be singing about holy and silent nights — can we take a moment once again to listen to Mary's song, believing how God is still doing great things for many Marys — and Toms, Rauls, Juans, Anitas, and you.

Yes, YOU. For God is wanting to use your life as well in making this world a better place for all.

The Magnificat is not filled with *fa la las*. It is a "hard, strong song," says Bonhoeffer, one which "tells of the power of God and the powerlessness of humankind."

And that is exactly why Mary sings it for us this day.

Amazing God, who works through us all, may this day we move with Mary's song, tapping our feet, snapping our fingers, and singing praises of how You are indeed doing great things among us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



8 1/2" x 14" UCC SUNDAY BULLETIN SERVICE

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