

Columbia United Church Of Christ

December 24, 2023

“God’s Love”



C U C C

Columbia United Church of Christ

CUCC Open and Affirming/Inclusion Covenant:

Columbia United Church of Christ celebrates God’s boundless and unconditional love by intentionally welcoming and affirming all God’s children.

No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey;
No matter where you are on your faith journey;
No matter your sexual orientation, gender expression, or identity;
No matter your race, culture, ethnicity, nationality, or politics;
No matter your age, ability, health, relationship status, or family structure;
No matter your social, economic, educational, legal, or life circumstances;
You are welcome here!

Called by Jesus to be an Open and Affirming, inclusive faith community, Columbia United Church of Christ commits to welcoming everyone into the full life of our congregation. Our paths and voices may differ, but we journey in faith together.

*Columbia
United Church
Of Christ*



December 24, 2023

10:30 Worship

"Advent IV"

*"... Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.
Rejoice in the LORD, and give thanks to God's Holy Name!"
-Psalm 97:11-12*

Welcome and Greetings

Pastor Rick

Prelude

"Intermezzo"

Steve Jannetti
Theodor Kirchner

Bringing in the Light of Christ

*Call to Worship

Pat Forward

Be on the lookout! Stand waiting and watching!
The day of God is at hand!

**Like the bud on a tree, God's possibilities are about to blossom!
New life is about to spring forth; hope and justice for all!**

Stay awake! God is very near.

For people who have walked in darkness, light is about to appear!

**We are here, watching and waiting with hope.
May God bring justice to all people this very day!**

Rejoice then, for Christ's presence lives among us,
Bringing light into our world.

**May our worship recall us to the center of our lives,
To the one who gives us breath and purpose and hope!
Come, let us worship God!**

*Gathering Hymn "Who Would Think that What Was Needed" #153

*Opening Prayer

Pat Forward

God of Love, you call our hearts to rejoice, but often, the worries of the world keep us from rejoicing. Forgive us for these times of despair. This Advent Season, we feel hurried from place to place, and the obligations seem overwhelming. Remind us again that the reason for the season is not the busyness and hectic pace, but the worth and dignity and justice you bring to our lives.

Help us to embody that cry for justice in the world. We know that you call us to be your hands and feet in the world, continuing the ministry of Jesus. We pray that this Advent Season may prepare us for that work once more. May we be renewed this Season that we may continue the work for justice. In Jesus' name we pray; Amen.

*Assurance of Blessing

Pastor Rick

Our lives are renewed through the birth of the Christ child once more in our midst! God calls us to embrace this perfect gift, but even when we are too distracted to notice, God still pursues us, calling us to the table of grace. Through our repentance and God's grace, we are forgiven, beloved, and blessed. Praise be to God!

*Response

“Christians All, Your Lord Is Coming”

*Christians all, your Lord is coming,
Drawing near in holy birth.
Ring the bells and sound the trumpets,
Let your music fill the earth.
Dance and move to show God's glory;
Kneel and pause to hear God's Word.
Al-le-lu-ia! Al-le-lu-ia!
Rise, and let your songs be heard!*

*Sharing God's Gift of Peace

Pastor Rick

May God's Peace be with you!

And also with you!

Children's Time & Lighting the Advent Candle

Pastor Rick

Response:

“Like a Child Jesus Comes”

(Sung as children return to their seats)

**Like a child love would send to reveal and to mend,
Like a child and a friend, Jesus comes!
Like a child we may find claiming heart, soul and mind,
Like a child strong and kind, Jesus comes!**

Community Psalter

Psalm 97

Pastor Rick
(insert)

Gospel Reading

Luke 1:57-80

Pat Forward
pg. #832

Anthem

“One Bright Star”

Celebration Singers
arr. Ed Lojeski

Sermon "God's Justice brings JOY!" Pastor Rick
*Hymn "When God Is a Child" (insert)

Community Prayer & Silent Prayer

The LORD's Prayer

In an effort to encourage inclusion, we suggest using the address "Creator God" in our unison recitation of The Lord's Prayer. You are certainly welcome to say "Our Father" instead of "Creator," "Trespases" instead of "debts," or "Thy" instead of "Your" if you prefer.

Creator God in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your 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 Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Sharing our Announcements of Community Life Pastor Rick

Invitation to the Offering

*As we have been blessed, we give to be blessings in God's World.
To give online text "GIVE" to 573.240.4041*

Offertory "Harmony of the Angels" Steve Jannetti
Johann Burgmuller

*Prayer of Dedication Pat Forward

God of Justice and Joy, we give these gifts to you to celebrate the birth of your Son in our midst once more. As we do, we pray that they may be used to work for justice, to strive for righteousness, and to envision your dream of Shalom. Amen.

*Benediction Pastor Rick

*Response "Let There be Peace on Earth"

***Let there be Peace on Earth and Let it Begin with me!
Let there be Peace on Earth; the Peace that was meant to be!
With God our Creator, Children all are we!
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony!
Let Peace begin with me; let this be the moment now!
With every step I take let this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally!
Let there be Peace on Earth; and let it begin with me!***

*Postlude "Andante" Steve Jannetti
A. Hesse

THE CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH

Luke 1:67-80

Is this the same Zechariah that doubted God's word only a few verses ago?

The answer, obviously, is yes, and the reason lies somewhere inside those verses. We know that the pregnant Mary, after the Annunciation, went with haste to help her cousin Elizabeth, and stayed there for three months. Throughout that time Zechariah sat in silence, contemplating Mary and the God humble enough to be born by her.

He watched as the same God of Israel who dwelled in the Temple chose to become one of us in the womb of a poor young girl. He watched as God worked through Mary, in her own humility, in her radiant joy, in her ardent charity. In his silent contemplation, he came to know both God's faithfulness and tender love, as well as his own need for Christ. It sounds a lot like our own Advent season. For four weeks we have been journeying with the pregnant Mary. We have prayed in silence and exclaimed in song, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." We have contemplated the mystery of the Incarnation and our need for God to break into our lives.

What we come to see is that God never asks us to understand our own poverty and littleness as a cruel exercise. He asks us to know ourselves better always in the light of the Incarnation. Often we hide those parts of ourselves we feel show vulnerability. We think those areas where we don't know the answers, or where we aren't in control, or where we simply can't love another make us unlovable.

But the Incarnation shows us that God is not afraid of our messiness, our uncertainty, our helplessness. God not only loves us in the midst of our limitations but takes on our very limited, human nature. God consecrates our limited nature and our poverty so that they are no longer our shame but our hope — because now, because of the Incarnation, in our humility we can learn to imitate God. The shadow of death holds no sway because our tender and compassionate God has made Themselves fragile like us; that we may be holy like Them.

The past few years have been a roller coaster ride full of sorrow and loneliness, boredom and helplessness, wars and insurrections, and hostile attitudes exhibited by our national leaders. But tomorrow, Christmas Day will dawn. Let us not be afraid to draw near to Mary and Joseph and Elizabeth and Zechariah in prayer. Like ours, that first Christmas was surrounded by chaos and uncertainty. Like Mary and Joseph and Elizabeth and Zechariah, draw closer to the divine child who, from before time began, chose us in love.

Like Zechariah, may we always be humble enough to see ourselves illuminated by the light of Christ; so that we may come to experience more intimately the depth of God's love and walk in the way of peace.

*-written by Cristina Otero, Yale University class of 2021
Shared at: www.stm.yale.edu*

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TODAY IN WORSHIP:

Worship Leader: Pat Forward

Ushers: John & Brenda Muench

Greeters: Anne Heine

Technology: Josh Muench & Lorry Dreier

Hospitality: Mary Lorber

Council Stewards: Mary Lorber

NEXT SUNDAY IN WORSHIP:

Worship Leader: Mahree Skala

Ushers: Phillip Neale

Greeters: Susan Dunham

Technology: Josh Muench & Brent Marcks

Hospitality: Mary Lorber

Council Stewards: Mary Lorber



Online giving

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NURSERY CARE is available for children in kindergarten and younger in room #201 in the educational wing. If you need help finding it, ask an usher!

ROOM AT THE INN

Room at the Inn is open and looking for volunteers! If you would like to sign up, or for more information, talk to Shelly Adams. Thank you for volunteering!

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

There will be two Christmas Eve worship services this year at 7:00 p.m. & 11:00 p.m. Both services will feature special music led by Casey Wood and Steve Jannetti, communion, and “Silent Night” sung by candlelight. Bring your family and friends to celebrate the reason for the season!

BRING MAGI GIFTS ON JANUARY 7

We will celebrate the gifts of the magi on January 7 by bringing gifts of our own! Bring hygiene items that morning (toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, etc.), and our Magi will process in with these gifts and lay them at the foot of the manger. All gifts will be shared with our mission partners.

CHILI COOKOFF

It's not too early to dust off your chili pot! The Men's Fellowship will host our annual Chili Cookoff January 21, right after worship! Bring your entries in, and vie for that golden ladle! Everyone, plan on sticking around after worship that day to sample all the entries and find out who wins! To sign up, talk to Doug Privitt or Brent Marcks.

LOOKING AHEAD IN 2024

Fastnacht is Tuesday, February 13, 2024 and the Men's Fellowship Pancake Breakfast to benefit Habitat for Humanity is Saturday, February 24, 2024. Mark your 2024 calendars!

THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR

Sun	12/24	<i>Christmas Eve</i>	
		Sunday School	9:00 a.m.
		Fellowship Time	10:00 a.m.
		Worship (in person and livestream)	10:30 a.m.
		Christmas Eve Worship	7:00 & 11:00 p.m.
Mon	12/25	<i>Church Office Closed – Merry Christmas!</i>	
Tue	12/26	Quilters	10:00 a.m.
		NO Staff meeting	
Wed	12/27	NO Choir rehearsals	
Thu	12/28	Inclusion & Affirmation Ministry Team Meeting 12:00 p.m.	
Sun	12/31	NO Sunday School	
		Fellowship Time	10:00 a.m.
		Worship (in person and livestream)	10:30 a.m.
Mon	1/1/24	<i>Church Office Closed – Happy New Year!</i>	

Columbia UCC Prayer List

Please keep in your prayers this week . . .

Jeff & Julie Kies . . . on the loss of their mother, Janet Kies

Jim Elliott . . . health issues

Cheryl Cobb . . . health issues

Students and staff at Alpha Hart Lewis Elementary . . . our partnership friend

The People of Israel/Palestine

Recovering from surgeries/procedures:

Jolene Hackman, Lloyd Mickelson

Health Issues:

Cliff Beckman, John Adams,

Neal Stumbo (Jean Strothmann's nephew)

Terry & Mike Freeman (friends of the Remeikas)

Stephanie Porter (Phillip Neale's niece)

Sheila . . . challenges in life and faith

The Koerkenmeier & Malicoat Families

Living in Care Facilities:

Bea Gordon, Neal Sprick, Gary Ehrhardt, Vernie Blank

Living in Independent Living Facilities:

Helen Graves, Don Privitt

Serving us in the military:

Christopher Tennill, Dane Wilson, Aaron Dachroeden, Jeffrey Sanderson

CUCC celebrates God's boundless love by:

Welcoming all God's Children;

Nurturing Faith and Spiritual Growth;

Challenging and inspiring everyone with vibrant worship;

Building a supportive church family;

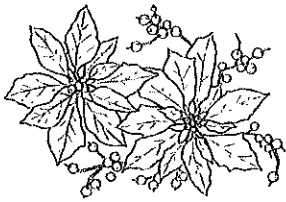
Transforming both the congregation and community

through service and outreach

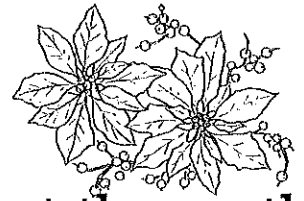


If you try to fit God into your life, You will never have time for God.

If you try to fit your life into God, You will always have time for what matters.



Psalm 97



Pastor Rick: God is Sovereign over all! Let the earth rejoice! Let the many coastlands be glad!

Cherubim: The heavens proclaim God's righteousness; all people behold God's glory!

Seraphim: The cities and towns rejoice, because of God's righteous judgements

Cherubim: God is over all the earth; God is exalted above all else.

Seraphim: God loves justice and rescues the faithful from the hands of the wicked.

Pastor Rick: Light dawns for those who embrace God's righteousness; Joy fills the heart of God's faithful servants!

All: Rejoice in the LORD! Give thanks to God's Holy Name! Again, we say, Rejoice!



153 Who Would Think That What Was Needed

*Isa. 11:1-6; Matt. 2:1-11; Luke 2:8-14**John Bell and Graham Maule, 1990; alt.*

1 Who would think that what was need-ed to trans-form and save the earth
 2 Shep-herds watch and sag-es won-der, mon-archs scorn and an-gels sing;
 3 Cen-tu-ries of skill and sci-ence span the past from which we move,



might not be a plan or ar-my proud in pur-pose, proved in worth?
 such a place as none would reck-on hosts a ho-ly, help-less thing;
 yet ex-per-i-ence ques-tions wheth-er with such prog-ress we im-prove.



Who would think, de-spite de-ri-sion, that a child should lead the way?
 Sta-ble-d beasts and pass-ing strang-ers watch a ba-by laid in hay:
 In our search for sense and mean-ing, lest our hopes and hu-mor fray,



God sur-pris-es earth with heav-en, com-ing here on Christ-mas Day.
 God sur-pris-es earth with heav-en, com-ing here on Christ-mas Day.
 God sur-pris-es earth with heav-en, com-ing here on Christ-mas Day.



This song was written by The Iona Community in Scotland, which frequently develops hymn texts through a collaborative process, often employing traditional tunes from the British Isles such as "Scarlet Ribbons."

Tune: SCARLET RIBBONS 8.7.8.7.D.
 English traditional melody
 Arr. John Bell and others, 1990

When God Is a Child

Unison

1. Hope is a star that shines in the night,
 2. Peace is a ribbon that cir - cles the earth,
 3. Joy is a song that wel - comes the dawn,
 4. Love is a flame that burns in our heart.

lead - ing us on till the morn - ing is bright.
 giv - ing a prom - ise of safe - ty and worth.
 tell - ing the world that the Sav - ior is born.
 Je - sus has come and will nev - er de - part.

Refrain

When God is a child there's joy in our song. The last shall be

first and the weak shall be strong, and none shall be a - fraid.