

Emmanuel United Church of Christ

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ

We Welcome You on this Third Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2023 - 9:30 AM

Dr. James Cope, Pastor Janice Garinger, Pastor in Care



Gathering around the Word

Ringing of the Church Tower Bell

Our Life Together

Prelude

The Solemn Declaration

Preparing our Hearts and Minds for Worship through Song

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;

Cast out our sin and enter in; 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!

Lighting of the Candle of JOY

Call to Worship

Leader: Have you noticed Are you paying Attention God is doing a new thing.

All: We watch and wait in the fierce joy of the coming Messiah.

Leader: You know the captives God is bringing freedom. You know the brokenhearted? God is bringing Healing.

All: We watch and wait in the fierce joy of the coming Messiah.

Leader: Beloved, listen. God is calling *you*. To be freed and to free your neighbors. To be healed and to heal your community. To testify to the Light among us.

All: We watch and wait in the fierce joy of the coming Messiah.

Leader: So, let us join our voices and our hearts as we proclaim the story of the one whose coming we anticipate and yet is already as close as our own breath.

All: We come to watch, to wait, and to worship in the fierce joy of Jesus Christ, the coming Messiah. Amen.

***Hymn**

“Rejoice, You Pure in Heart”

#55 (NCH)

Call to Confession

Unison Prayer of Confession

Womb of Creation, we often get caught up in what we do not have –

The material things we lack, the access and privilege we may lack, the answers, even, that seem to escape us in crucial moments.

Forgive us for the times we forget to remember you. Hold us accountable for the moment we failed to see you in the blessings of ages past.

Help us to reconnect with our joy and our gratitude.

Remind us to name our joys, our miracles, our deliverances, our redemptions...one by one...for You are there in them all.

(Silence is kept for personal reflection and prayer)

Assurance of Pardon

Leader: God hears what is named aloud, what is named within, and what is yet to be named.

All: We go forth knowing that the Spirit of the Lord is upon us...and this joy we have...the world did not give it and the world can not take it. Thanks be to God! Amen and amen!

***Choral Response**

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;

Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;

Fill the whole world with heaven’s peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

***Affirmation of Faith**

We believe that God has come to us as a little child,

making our weakness his strength,

securing our salvation by becoming one of us,

blessing us with with a steadfast savior,

filling our hearts with joy to be shared with one another.

We believe that God has birthed righteousness and justice into the world,

giving us a law that will be written upon our hearts,

making the cause of the oppressed the highest priority,

declaring an everlasting reign of peace,

defeating the power of pain and suffering.

We believe that God calls us to participate in this reality of love,

inviting us to proclaim Christ’s resurrection at the Table,

transforming us as disciples to go out into the world,

**sending us forth to announce his kingdom of peace and comfort,
challenging us to see everyone as nothing less than beloved children.
This we believe. This we preach. This we seek to embody in word and deed.**

Listening for the Word

A Time with the Children and Dismissal to Sunday School

Choral Preparation **“Spirit of the Living God”** **#283 (NCH)**
**Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me; Spirit of the living God, fall afresh
on me. Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh
on me.**

The Scripture Reading Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11
Reflection “It’s Joy...” Pastor Cope

Hymn of Faith **“Joy to the World”** **#132 (NCH)**

Responding to the Word

Call to Offering

Offertory

***Offertory Response** **“Take My Gifts”** **#562(NCH)**
**Take whatever I can offer, gifts that I have yet to find, Skills that I am slow
to sharpen, talents of the hand and mind, things made beautiful for others in
the place where I must be: take my gifts and let me love you, God who first of
all loved me.**

***Prayer of Dedication**

**We come in the name of the One who filled the hungry, who lifted up the
lowly, and brought the powerful ones down from their thrones. We aim to
share our gifts and resources so that we may continue the mission of God and
become the Good News we wish to see. Amen.**

The Ministry of Remembrance and Prayer

Prayers of the People - The Lord’s Prayer (using debts and debtors)

Bearing the Word into the World

***Closing Hymn** **“I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day”** **#Insert**
***Charge and Benediction**
***Chimes with Silent Meditation**

*Postlude

*Indicates that all who are able. Please stand. **Bold** print indicates unison reading.
Notice Someone Missing? *If so, give them a call and let them know they are missed.*