Trinity United Church of Christ

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Where God is Still Speaking!
Trinity United Church of Christ
December 12, 2021
3rd Sunday of Advent
Annual Congregational Meeting
9:30AM In-Person and Online Worship Service

Awakening joyful service guided by our still speaking God!

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We ask that you wear a mask while in the Church building.

* Congregational responses in bold print.
* Denotes standing as you are able.

PRELUDE MUSIC – “Mary, Woman of the Promise” – C. Tambling

WELCOME/TIME OF SHARING

* CALL TO WORSHIP

Rejoice! The spirit of God is sending us:

to bring good news to the oppressed,

to comfort the brokenhearted,

to proclaim liberty to the captives,

to proclaim the year of favor among God’s people.

Rejoice! The work of the Spirit is calling us:

to rebuild ancient relationships ruined by injustice,

to repair the cities as places of hope,

to restore land devastated across generations.

to proclaim the year of favor among God’s people.

Rejoice! The Glory of the Spirit is leading us:

to cast off any faint spirit and put on the mantle of praise,

to take root as the plantings of the HOLY ONE, to display God’s glory.

Come, let us worship in Joy!

*HYMN #109 “With Joy Draw Water
LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

The Candle of Joy
Isaiah 35:1-10

There are some blessings that are only revealed to us when the day is darkest.
There are some mercies that only shine when the shadows are deepest.

There are some graces that are only glimpsed when the night is the longest.
O come, O come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing.

In Advent, we remember the darkest days
and await the brilliant light of hope.
(The candle of Hope is lit)

In Advent, we remember the thirsty days
and await the quenching light of peace.
(The candle of Peace is lit)

In Advent, we remember the silent days
and await the singing light of joy.
(The candle of Joy is lit)

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
"Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God...who will come and save you."
Our souls magnify the Lord and our spirits rejoice in God, our Savior.

PRAYER

Eternal Creator, with you each moment of life is full of wonder and surprise.
We pray you make us watchful as we await the coming of Christ. Grant that we may
not be found sleeping in sin, but awake and rejoicing in your newness of life.
Through the same Jesus Christ our Savior, Amen.

ADVENT CANDLE SONG v3 (Insert)

ANTHEM

“Shine, Candle, Shine”
Words by J. Paul Williams; Music by Anna Laura Page
Senior Choir
CALL TO CONFESSION
Let us confess those places where we need to grow
to prepare for Christ to come into our lives.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION
O Holy God, our Advent waiting is a confession. We wait for a Messiah because the
proud are still powerful, the mighty are still exalted, and the hungry people stand
unheard at the door. We wait for your incarnation in human form because we have
not recognized you in our sister, we have not loved you in our brother, we have
not served you in our neighbor. In the stillness of Advent love and light, heal us
and make us new through the good tidings of your presence in our lives. Amen.

(Moment of Silent Reflection)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

SCRIPTURES
Isaiah 12:2-6
You will say in that day: I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry
with me, your anger turned away, and you comforted me. 2 Surely God is my salvation; I will
trust, and will not be afraid, for the LORD God is my strength and my might; he has become
my salvation. 3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. 4 And you will say
in that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known his deeds among
the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted. 5 Sing praises to the LORD, for he has
done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. 6 Shout aloud and sing for joy,
O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Philippians 4:4-7
Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 4 Let your gentleness be known
to everyone. The Lord is near. 5 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by
prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
6 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country,
where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 40 When Elizabeth heard
Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy
Spirit 41 and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is
the fruit of your womb.” 42 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my
Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.” And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

SERMON
“The Joy of Saying ‘Yes!’”

PRAYER/LORD’S PRAYER

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 sins
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and glory for ever. Amen.

*HYMN #123 “Mary, Woman of the Promise”

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe that God has come to us;
that God brought us into being,
that this God gave us breath and purpose,
that we have been blessed to be a blessing to others,
that we have fallen short of this commandment
but that God has nevertheless loved us despite our brokenness.
We believe that God is coming to us;
that God is not happy to leave us alone,
that this God will come to us as a particular human being,
that God will be made known to us in flesh and bone like ours,
that Mary will soon give birth and Joseph will soon clap his hands in joy,
that Jesus Christ will be born and our salvation made complete.
We believe that God will come to us;
that God will have the final word and that Word will be good,
that this God will give us the presence of the Spirit to continue our work,
that we are called to be disciples to all the corners of the earth,
that the day is coming when tears and pain will be no more,
and all will gather at the Table to sing an endless and perfect “Alleluia!”

CELEBRATION OF OUR GIFTS

OFFERTORY RESPONSE
“As with Gladness Men of Old” V3
As they offered gifts most rare at thy cradle, rude and bare,
So may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin’s alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to thee, our heav’nly king.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION
Gracious and Loving God take our gifts in their many forms and use them
and us to spread the hope, peace and joy of this Advent. Invade our dreams
and coax us to be better in our waiting and sharing of this season. Amen.

HYMN #303 “Rejoice, Give Thanks and Sing”

FINAL BLESSING
Go forth confident that God is faithful:
Those who have sowed in sorrow will return
with shouts of joy bearing the harvest of God’s work.
Rejoice always - the Lord is near.
1 With joy draw wa-ter from the spring; sal-va-tion’s liv-ing well.
2 A shoot has sprung from Jes-se’s tree; of God the cho-sen One.
3 With love the poor will be re-ceived; the proud will turn a-side;
4 The wolf shall lie down with the lamb; the calf and li-on play.
5 With joy draw wa-ter from the spring; sal-va-tion’s liv-ing well.

The Ho-ly One is in your midst; glad prais-es sing and tell!
A branch of knowl-edge and of truth; a gift of love has come!
And faith-ful-ness will be a path, and righ-teous-ness the guide!
God’s peace shall dwell with-in the land; a child shall show the way!
The Ho-ly One is in your midst; glad prais-es sing and tell!

This test combines images from two Advent readings from the book of Isaiah, including the passage anticipating the reign of peace. The author, Anne McKinstry, has served as a writer-in-residence at Oulu United Church of Christ in Massachusetts.

Tune: ST. COLUMBA altered to 8.6.8.6.
Irish traditional melody
Harm. Charles V. Stanford, 1906
Advent Candle Song

REFRAIN: Congregation and choir

We light the Advent candle to shine on us today,

to give us hope, to make us warm while

we await the coming of Christmas Day.

Choir:
1. When Mary came to Bethlehem,
a lantern shed its light
While Joseph led the little donkey
through the silent night.

REFRAIN: Congregation and choir

Choir:
2. An empty stable was where they stayed
the night our Lord was born;
The lantern shone upon his face
while Mary kept him warm.

REFRAIN: Congregation and choir

Choir:
3. When shepherds came to see the baby,
torches lit the way
So they could find the stable
where Jesus lay.

REFRAIN: Congregation and choir

Choir:
4. As Christmas nears we light his way,
but not to a stable door,
Lord Jesus come and live within
our hearts forevermore!

REFRAIN: Congregation and choir

Text and Music: Arthur Clyde

Advent Candle Song (11-2408) by Arthur Clyde
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Mary, Woman of the Promise


Mary Frances Fleischaker, 1988

1 Mary, woman of the promise; vessel
2 Mary, song of holy wisdom sung before
3 Mary, morning star of justice; mirror
4 Mary, model of compassion; wounded home for treasured seed: Help us to be
5 Mary, woman of the gospel; humble

of your people's dreams: Through your open, fore the world began: Faithful to the
of the Radiant Light: In the shadows by your offspring's pain: When our hearts are
will ing spirit waters of God's goodness streamed. Word within you, as you bore God's wondrous plan.
of life's journey, be a beacon for our sight. torn by sorrow, teach us how to love again.
true disciples, bearing fruit in word and deed.

This text, selected as the winner in a regional Hymn Society competition seeking contemporary Marian hymns, portrays Mary's many roles in fulfilling God's promise. The author is an Adrian Dominican sister whose ministry has focused on worship and the arts.

Tune: QUEM PASTORES 8.7.8.7
German Carol, 14th century
Harm. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1956

Harmonization Copyright © Oxford University Press. From The English Hymnal 1906.
Reign of Christ

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Rejoice, Give Thanks and Sing

Charles Wesley, 1746; alt.

Phil. 4:4, Rev. 3:7, 19:6-7

1 Rejoice, give thanks and sing; your Sovereign God adore!
2 Our Savior Jesus reigns, the God of truth and love;
3 Christ Jesus cannot fail to rule both earth and heaven;
4 Rejoice in glorious hope, for Christ the Judge shall come,

For Christ has robbed death's sting and triumphs evermore. Lift
The Lamb who purged our stains is crowned with power above. Lift
The keys of death and hell are to the Savior given. Lift
And take the faithful up to their eternal home. We

up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.
up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.
up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.
soon shall hear a heavenly voice above the trumpet's sound, "Rejoice!"

This Ascension text, one of the festival hymns by Charles Wesley, was published originally in John Wesley's Moral and Sacred Poems (1744). Somewhat altered, it appeared in this familiar version in Charles' 1746 collection, Hymns for Our Lord's Resurrection.

Tune: DARWALL'S 148th 6.6.6.8.8.
John Darwall, 1773.
Portions of today’s worship elements have been taken from the following:


**Affirmation of Faith:** Permission is given for use in congregational worship.
Written by Rev. Stephen M. Fearing - [www.stephenmfearing.com](http://www.stephenmfearing.com)

**Prelude** - *Mary, Woman of the Promise.* Setting by Christopher Tambling. © 1997 Kevin Mayhew Ltd.


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**Worship Leaders:**

Rev. Dr. Frederick Young  
Pastor  
Ann Harvey  
Lay Liturgist  
John McKay  
Choir Director  
Jane Eicker  
Organist  
Sandy Busche and Roberta Weiant  
Greeters  
Don and Cindy Blevins  
Ushers  
Bonnie Smith  
Acolyte  
Georgia Hollobaugh, Kara Young,  
Tech Team  
Luke Milhimes, Carl Barrick, Russell Bailey, George Steckert, Rayna Cooper, Stacy Rushwald
Trinity United Church of Christ
Gettysburg, Pa
3rd Sunday of Advent

December 12, 2021


Rev. Dr. Frederick A. Young

Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to Him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

John 6:30-35

One of the many paintings of Mary that hang in the parsonage caught my eye this week as I was sitting with our familiar text. It is a layered work of Kara’s that shows a newly expectant Mary dancing for joy on a hillside filled with flowers. Barely visible is the under painting of honeycomb, bees and butterflies, and a host of flowers that attract the pollinators. We started to talk about growing, feeding, rooting, and nourishment. What if Mary, the Mother of God, is truly the vessel of
love and nourishment for the world? We know that Jesus refers to himself as the 'Bread of Life' and the 'Living Water'. Because we accept these statements to be true about Christ, then we must consider his mother, the one who conceived, carried, birthed and tended God's Son, to be an agent of nurturing grace.

The Angel Gabriel approached a young woman and changed her life in the span of moments because she had found favor with God. With independence so rarely apparent in her time and culture, the young girl joyfully said 'Yes' and agreed to carry God's gift to the world. Before taking his leave the angel shared that Mary's aging cousin was also to give birth to a son. Mary left home and traveled many miles to visit with her cousin, Elizabeth. Together, these women were the picture of extraordinary conception.

In her book, *In Wisdom's Path*, Jan Richardson captures this family reunion:

*Elizabeth's blessing of Mary is an act of creative confidence. It well describes what took place between these two women whose pregnancies seem out of season but who navigate God's curious spiral of time with a fierce passion. Elizabeth's blessing of Mary is a full-bodied blessing, springing from the stirring at the core of her being and enfolding Mary, body and soul. Elizabeth's wisdom comes from her womb, and she pours it out to Mary in a powerful act of benediction and consecration.*
Luke’s Gospel offers us an early Christmas gift in this story of two women from different generations bonding in a very personal way while carrying children that will change the world. John leaps for joy in Elizabeth’s womb when Mary arrives and Elizabeth recognizes her cousin as blessed, the mother of her Lord. God gives two mothers community and connection, faith and family, to carry them through the rough days of their pregnancies. Nourishment and nurturing when they are likely feeling so out of place.

For the first time, food became a central focus for me while I thought about motherhood. I came across this local project in my study. The Painted Turtle Farm is ¾ of an acre on the Gettysburg College campus. It has been in operation since 2005, and in 2013 joined in partnership with Casa de la Cultura, a community organization that promotes the cultural rights of immigrants. The farm consists of 30 raised garden beds available for local immigrant families to grow their own food. Recently, a native pollinator garden was planted to attract the bees and butterflies, increasing the farm’s output. Gettysburg College’s Center for Public Service, together with Casa de la Cultura, address social justice and food sovereignty through sustainable agriculture. These two organizations are making connections that the community can see. They are changing food sustainability for our most vulnerable population. To connect speech with practice, the farm will also
start growing the “three sisters,” an indigenous farming practice in which corn, beans, and squash work together to help each other grow, using native seeds.

*Food justice is the idea that everyone should have access to food that is healthy, culturally appropriate and affordable. It’s important that you know where your food is grown so you don’t lose your connection to it. So it doesn’t end up an abstract thing you pick up at the Supermarket. Food is political, environmental and personal.*

Sean P. Gettysburg College Alumni

The development of hope within a community takes time. The Painted Turtle Farm is a great example of a community working together to spark change. One that prompts us to ask, how many Marys, Elizabeths, Zechariahs and Josephs are here among us, awaiting an opportunity to connect more deeply with the people around them? It can be difficult to hear Mary’s song today. The world is often upside down with illness, poverty, and wars that displace people. Yet we are reminded that God is good. God is not only still speaking, but also still at work in our world! This Advent, we imagine once again that Mary joyfully agreed to God’s request and lovingly prepared for the birth of the Holy One. Her ‘yes’, encourages us to answer God’s call, in its many forms, and follow the path of faith.

“And Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for God has looked with favor on the lowliness of God's servant.’
When I read Luke’s Gospel this week, I heard the message of nurture and nourishment. Food for the body, fulfillment for the soul, healing for our hurting world. The bread of life in abundance. What did you hear? How can Mary and Elizabeth’s visit fulfill your needs? In your Advent prayers, what are you waiting for? … I leave you with this poem by Jan Richardson:

\[
\text{In blood, be thou blessed. In flesh, be thou blessed.}
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\[
\text{In all you choose, in all you hold, in all you gather to you, be thou blessed.}
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\[
\text{In all you release, in all you return,}
\]

\[
\text{In all you cast from you, be thou blessed.}
\]

\[
\text{In all that takes form in you be blessed,}
\]

\[
\text{In all that comes forth from you, be blessed.}
\]

\[
\text{In all thy paths be thou blessed!}
\]

May it be so. Amen.


Ideas and themes from this sermon have been adapted from the following:

