



*December 17, 2023*  
*Greenfield Charge United Church of Christ*

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*Sunday Morning Meditation*

A baby is God's opinion that the world should go on.

– Carl Sandburg

Greenfield Charge United Church of Christ  
Mt Hope 8:30am                      Greenfield 9:50am  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent (Joy)  
'Ancient Ruins...Everlasting Covenant'

December 17, 2023  
Grace 11:00am

*Community News*

*Prayer List and Prayers of the People*

*Prelude/Lighting of the Candles*

\* *Call to Worship*

*Psalm 34*

O magnify our God with me and let us exalt God's name together.

**Our souls magnify the Lord.**

**Our spirits rejoice in God our Savior!**

We will bless the Lord at all times;

God's praise shall continually be in our mouths.

**Our souls magnify the Lord.**

**God's mercy endures from generation to generation.**

Let our souls make their boasts in the Lord;

Let the humble hear and be glad.

**Our souls magnify the Lord**

**for the Mighty One has done great things.**

\* *Invocation*

*Inspired by Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11*

God of Mary, Mother of Jesus – and all of the lowly who seek to be lifted – God of Isaiah, who felt the Spirit upon him calling him to bring Good News - Let your Spirit fall upon us in this hour.

Out of the ruins, remind us of your everlasting covenant.

Anoint us as we seek to share and experience your Good News.

Bind our broken hearts. Awaken us to the liberation within and among us. Embolden us to proclaim your favor as we seek you more deeply. Amen.

\* *Opening Hymn*

**"O Come, All Ye Faithful"**

*Mt Hope PH #132*

*Greenfield CH #249*

*Grace TH #112*

## *Advent Invitation*

*(All candles are light)*

We come to this season of Advent and gather around a wreath to light candles. This wreath reminds us of the circle of our human community and the lights that illuminate the many ways in which we bring ourselves to the Incarnation, God's longed-for presence - human and holy, Emmanuel - God with us and God coming to us.

## *Advent Scripture*

**John 1:1-5 NRSV**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

## *Advent Remembrance*

We remind ourselves that there has been much light in the world that has been extinguished and we acknowledge that we have let it happen.

We remember hopes that have been extinguished. (*extinguish candle*)

We can barely remember a time of peace. (*extinguish candle*)

We have tried to protect our own joys and ignored the sorrows of others. (*extinguish candle*)

We have let love go out and have not even lifted a hand to protect the flame. (*extinguish candle*)

Now we have not fresh wicks but crumpled ones, and yet we name and claim this truth: God gives us courage and compassion to re-light hope, peace, joy and love in our lives and our times.

## *Advent Candles*

We are empowered by the advent of Emmanuel, God with Us, because of whom Isaiah prophesied no bruised reed would be broken nor dimly burning wick quenched until justice fills all that lives and grows.

We light the candle of **Hope** for earth and air and seas, for the creatures dwelling among us and the plants alive with God's Spirit.

We light the candle of **Peace** in the midst of violence and conflict, of fear in home, discord in family and work, terror in the street, controversy that makes strangers from friends, wars that kill God's precious children, and we say that Peace is stronger.

We light candle of **Joy** because we believe that joy, not anger or fear, is the root of all justice.

### *Advent Prayer*

**Emmanuel, we celebrate the Advent of the past with its precious words and traditions, and we light an Advent of new hope, peace, and joy for all the seasons of your children. Amen.**

### *Prayer of Transformation*

**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 forgot to remember you. Hold us accountable for the moments we failed to see you in the blessings of ages past. Help us reconnect with our joy and our gratitude. Remind us to name our joys, our miracles, our deliverances, our redemptions. One by one by one, for you are there in them all.**

### *Words of Grace*

God hears what is named aloud, what is named within, and what is yet to be named. Go forth knowing that the Spirit of the Lord is upon you, and this joy you have – the world didn't give it and the world can't take it. Amen.

### *Special Music*

Beaver Walter

\* *The Reading of the Holy Gospel*

Luke 1:26-28 NRSV

*Gloria Tibi (Glory be to Thee, O Lord.)*

TH #497

*The Birth of Jesus Foretold*

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup> But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup> He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup> The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup> And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup> Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

\* *Gloria Patri*

*Children's Message / Congregation Conversation*

\* *Meditation Hymn* "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

*Mt Hope* VH #89

*Greenfield* CH #250

*Grace* TH #108

*Today's Message / Grace UCC Children's Christmas Pageant*

*"Joyful Animal Nativity"*

\* *The Apostle's Creed*

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:  
And in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, our Lord; who was  
conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered  
under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he  
descended into hades; the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the  
Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick  
and the dead.

