

Welcome to the Community Church of Richmond United Church of Christ

Our Church at Worship on the Third Sunday of Advent
The Sunday of Joy!

December 12, 2021 10:00 A.M.

*Our Mission: **To be an inviting, caring faith community
connecting with Christ.***

Welcome, visitors! Our greeters have welcome bags to share with you, so please make sure they know you're visiting. This service is livestreamed to Facebook. While mostly only worship leaders appear on camera, occasionally members of the congregation are captured by our camera. If you have concerns about this, please speak with an usher or staff member.

Tune into Facebook at 10:00 on Sunday to share this time of worship. **You can access that video even if you don't have a Facebook account** – just type in <https://www.facebook.com/CommunityChurchOfRichmond/>

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD

PRELUDE Penny Kraft

WORDS OF WELCOME Rev. Hope Molozaiy

GATHERING SONG	“God with Us”	Kim May
You've come	You are God with us	
To bring peace		
To be love	You've come	
To be nearer to us	To be hope	
	To this world	
You've come	For Your honor and name	
To bring life		
To be light	You've come	
To shine brighter in us	To take sin	
Oh Emmanuel	To bear shame	
God with us	And to conquer the grave	

Our Deliverer	You are here and
You are Savior	You are holy
In Your presence we find our strength	We are standing
Over everything	In Your glory (Lord)
Our redemption	
God with us	

Written by: JASON INGRAM, LESLIE JORDAN
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Integrity Music 2013

CALL TO WORSHIP & OPENING PRAYER

One: A voice calls out in the wilderness.

**All: It sings of a home for all.
It speaks of justice and peace.**

One: We could choose to ignore it.

**All: We could drown out that song.
We could choose not to listen.**

One: Instead we come into this space and time.

**All: We let the world grow quiet.
We listen.**

One: A voice calls out in the wilderness. Do you hear it?

**All: We hear it.
As we listen, we worship.**

One: Let us draw near to God.

Expansive God, We know that the church is your house, and your house has room for everyone. Yet too often, instead of setting the table for our neighbors, we block the door. Instead of welcoming all, we judge others by our standards. Instead of sharing our second coat, we hide it in the attic, holding on with fear instead of letting go with love.

**All: Remind us that your home is a home for ALL,
that truth requires hard work,
that peace requires uncomfortable justice.
Help us to be bold enough to see it
and brave enough to live it. With hope we pray, amen.**

One: Family of faith, God sent prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel to us because this work is not easy. Fortunately for us, when we mess up – when we lose our way or forget our call – we are met with grace. God could not love us any more or any less than God already does. So remember and rest in the good news:

**All: We are at home with God – forgiven, claimed, and loved.
The door is always open for us.
Thanks be to God! Amen.**

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

Mike Kennedy and Dawn Conley

WE LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD

SCRIPTURE READING The Gospel according to Luke 1:26-56
 When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David’s house. The virgin’s name was Mary. When the angel came to her, he said, “Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!” She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob’s house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom.”

Then Mary said to the angel, “How will this happen since I haven’t had sexual relations with a man?”

The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God’s Son. Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled ‘unable to conceive’ is now six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible for God.”

Then Mary said, “I am the Lord’s servant. Let it be with me just as you have said.” Then the angel left her.

Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. She entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. With a loud voice she blurted out, “God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her.”

Mary said,

“With all my heart I glorify the Lord!

In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.

He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.

Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored
 because the mighty one has done great things for me.

Holy is his name.

He shows mercy to everyone,

from one generation to the next,
 who honors him as God.

He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty-handed.

He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,
remembering his mercy,

just as he promised to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months, and then returned to her home.

WE RESPOND TO THE CALL OF GOD

TIME OF PRAYER

Pastoral Prayer

The 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SONG RESPONSE "Drawing Nearer"

by Christopher Grundy

Even in the midst of all of this,
Trouble on the news, no peace within,
Still there is a light in the distance
Drawing nearer
Drawing nearer.

So open up our eyes to see your light,
Open up our arms, they're clenched so tightly,
Come in like a thief and steal
Our hearts
Like a baby,
Like a baby.
Even in the midst of all of this.

THE OFFERING

Invitation to Give: We are so thankful for the continued financial support that we have continued to receive during this time!

You may always send your check directly to the church at PO Box 246, Richmond IL, 60071.

Prayer of Dedication

God who welcomes us home, who creates space, who leaves a chair with our name on it: we have two coats and we are giving one away. That's what this offering is. It's our second coat. It's our hearts on our sleeves. It's our audacious hope that there can indeed be a better world than this one. So take these gifts and use them to move us closer to that promised day. Gratefully we pray, amen.

Our worship continues in the church basement with the children's presentation of the Christmas story. We will gather there for the remainder of worship.

Call to Worship, Opening Prayer, and Candle Lighting words adapted from words by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org." CCLI License No. 1908882

CHURCH NEWS

CHURCH CABINET meets tomorrow night at 7:00 on Zoom. If you have business that needs to be discussed, please contact President Charles Kemp or Pastor Hope.

BIBLE STUDY meets on Zoom each Tuesday at 1:30pm. Our Meeting ID is 896 5130 1635 and the passcode is 003204. No special knowledge is needed! This Tuesday, we'll be studying John 1:1-14.

FINANCIAL PLEDGES

We need to know your pledges for 2022. If you haven't yet, please let Ruth Zehr know as soon as possible what you plan to give in the coming year. Cabinet meets tomorrow and it will help our discussion of the budget if we have as complete a picture as possible of the financial expectations for next year. You can reach Ruth at rkzher@aol.com or 847-971-7589.

GIVE TO THE CHRISTMAS FUND of the United Church of Christ is a tangible expression of God's love and light in the world. This fund provides annuity supplements, health insurance supplements, emergency grants, and Christmas gift checks to individuals who have long served the church, such as pastors, widows of pastors, and pastors in transition between churches. You can contribute through the end of the year; just mark "UCC Christmas Fund" on your giving envelope or check memo line.

DECEMBER EVENTS

- Live Community Church Advent Calendar. Watch for videos daily on Facebook and YouTube
- Advent Party – December 19, after worship. Everyone is invited to gather in the church basement to enjoy some Christmas cookies, crafting, a little carol singing, and some warm fellowship.
- Christmas Eve Worship: In-person and online, 8:00 PM, Dec. 24th.
- Pajama Sunday – December 26 – with worship **ONLINE ONLY**

May you engage with these opportunities to the fullest as we prepare to greet the Holy One among us. See the back page for more details on our late December plans.

PRAYERS for the Week of December 12, 2021

If you have prayer updates or announcements to share, Please send them to BOTH Pastor Hope (pastorhope@richmonducc.org) AND our office manager, Brandi Pletcher (office@richmonducc.org). THANKS!
We will leave a person on our list for four weeks, unless asked to leave them on longer.

JOYS: A wonderful choir concert by the Richmond-Burton High School choir was enjoyed here on Wednesday

PRAYERS FOR:

The Blanton family
Brandi Pletcher
Deann Workmon
Linda Swenson
Sheryl Vezina
Dawn Conley's daughter, Kelly DeSalvo
Bob Howe
Marti Swanson's friend, Mary
Refugees on the Belarus border
Cheryl Heber's family friend, Margaret

Ongoing Prayers:

Lydia Blanton's friend, Natalie, and Natalie's family
Julie Leighninger
Marti Swanson's brother, John Baldwin
Ella Watts, Melissa Jones's mother
Louise Strah's niece, Amy Lenik

Members and Friends who are Homebound or in Nursing Facilities:

Mercedes Ahlgrim (New Mexico), Sharon Mensing (Sterling),
Bob Krueger, Betty Waspi

UPDATES ON COVID AND CHRISTMAS

“All I want for Christmas is safe and healthy friends and family!”

As COVID cases rise in our area and Christmas approaches, it seems a good time for some updates and reminders.

COVID cases have increased dramatically in McHenry County in the past couple weeks. That increase isn't because of the omicron variant; it had started well before omicron was detected in Illinois. It's simply because the virus is more persistent than our efforts to keep it away. So, because I love you, I remind and encourage us all to be persistent about our prevention and care. Wear your mask. Sanitize. Vaccinate and boost as you best can. If you are feeling at all unwell, stay home – from church and whatever else you can stay home from.

Here in worship, we continue to take reasonable precautions. Everyone has done a great job of being persistent at wearing your masks throughout Sunday morning. We continue to have about half our pew seating blocked off to help us keep safe distance from each other, and we've usually had 20-30 people attending in our sanctuary that can hold a little over 100. Some of you recently asked me to clarify what our guidelines are for singing together right now: We continue to choose gathering songs to feature just Kim and Penny, but you are welcome to sing along with both hymns in our service. Again, we keep our masks on and our distance, and most of us sing quite quietly, all of which reduce the risks of singing together.

Looking ahead to Christmas Eve, we hope and plan to hold worship in-person, and to livestream that service as usual. We'll keep all to the same precautions described above and keep that service just a little bit shorter than traditional. We do plan to sing carols as a part of that service, though probably a few less than usual, and letting Kim lead us in a couple of them. We also plan to light our individual Christmas candles as we traditionally do at the end of that service. We plan to provide small 'snuffers' to extinguish those candles instead of blowing them out.

Sunday comes again on December 26. At this time, we plan to offer worship online only on the 26th. I'll have more details about that plan soon, but for now, know that you can spend our traditional “Pajama Sunday” at home in your pajamas!

Your church leaders and I continue to try our best to make these decisions wisely and faithfully. If you have questions or concerns about our practices for worship and gathering, please let me know; I'm happy to listen and talk.

- Pastor Hope