



LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

The Blanton Family – Lydia, Jake, Annabelle, and Ryder

One: In times like ours, joy can be hard to summon.

**Many: In times like ours, joy can be hard even to imagine.**

One: And yet still the season calls us to make merry.

**Many: And yet still the Scripture tells us to “rejoice always.”**

One: It sounds almost ludicrous.

**Many: It borders on outrageous.**

One: How can we rejoice under the burden of so much injustice?

**Many: How can we rejoice under the pall of so much death?**

One: It’s enough to make those who are alone feel lonely.

**Many: It’s enough to make the grieving or depressed feel sadder still.**

One: But our joy does not depend on our circumstance.

**Many: Our joy is not derived from measurable outcomes.**

One: Advent invites us to rejoice in God’s goodness,

**Many: even as we watch and wait and aren’t sure what’s coming.**

One: Advent invites us to rejoice in all the ways God’s love is with us,

**Many: even as it gives us courage to be true to however we feel.**

One: It won’t be long now ‘til the blessed babe is born.

**Many: May we rejoice in the true light shining its way into the world.**

*The first two purple candles are lit.*

**All: For such a time as this, kindle our hope and fill us with your peace.**

*The pink candle is lit.*

**All: For such a time as this, may our joy be full.**

HYMN

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

sung by Charles Kemp

Verse 1:

**O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant  
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem;  
Come and behold him, born the King of angels,  
O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him  
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**

Verse 2:

**Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;  
O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him  
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**

Tune: John F. Wade 1751 | Melody: Adeste Fideles Irregular, John F Wades ,1751; Public Domain

CHILDREN'S TIME with special guests – When Mary learned that she'd become the mother of Jesus, one of the first things she wanted to do was to go see her cousin, Elizabeth. It brought both of them great joy. Who do you hurry to tell when you have exciting news? Are you blessed to be the person that someone else hurries to with THEIR good news? Give thanks to God for those people in our lives who truly share our joy.

## ADVENT PRAYER FROM THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

### SCRIPTURE READING

#### The Gospel according to Luke 1:39-56 (NRSV)

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. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 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."

And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

### MESSAGE

For Such a Time as This: How Can We Sing for Joy?

HYMN

“My Life Flows On (How Can I Keep from Singing?)” #476, v. 1, 2, & 4

**My life flows on in endless song;  
Above earth’s lamentation,  
I hear the sweet, though far-off hymn  
That hails a new creation.  
Through all the tumult and the strife,  
I hear the music ringing;  
It finds an echo in my soul  
How can I keep from singing?**

**What though my joys and comforts die?  
My Savior still is living.  
What though the shadows gather round?  
A new song Christ is giving.  
No storm can shake my inmost calm,  
While to that rock I’m clinging;  
Since love commands both heaven and earth,  
How can I keep from singing?**

**I lift my eyes; the cloud grows thin;  
I see the blue above it;  
And day by day this pathway smooths,  
Since first I learned to love it.  
The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,  
A fountain ever-springing;  
All things are mine since I am Christ’s  
How can I keep from singing?**

Tune Anon. In Bright Jewels for Sunday School | Ed Robert Lowry 1869 alt  
St 3, Doris Plenn C 1957 1751 Music CCLI License No. 1908882

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 “O How Shall I Receive You”

#102

Verse 1:

**O how shall I receive you, how meet you on your way,  
Blessed hope of every people, my soul’s delight and stay?  
O Jesus, Jesus, give me now by your own pure light,  
To know whate’er is pleasing and welcoming in your sight.**

#102, The New Century Hymnal; Tune: St. Theodulph 7.6.7.6.D. (Valet Will Ich Dir Geben) Melchior Teschner, 1615

OFFERING Invitation to Give – We are so thankful for the continued financial support that we have continued to receive during this time! Though we rarely see each other in person these days, our church is still: providing worship; providing Sunday school for our church kids; connecting members with each other; supporting neighbors in need, locally and further away. We believe those things are parts of God’s calling for us in this place and we can do them because of steady financial support.

You may always send your check directly to the church at PO Box 246, Richmond IL, 60071. Also, please see the announcement about giving to the Christmas Fund of the United Church of Christ in this season.

Prayer of Dedication – You might pray as you write your check and address your envelope to the church... Creator, Redeemer, Holy Spirit, bless these gifts of hope, compassion, faithfulness, and gratitude. For all that your love has already done, thank you. For all you will yet do, through these gifts and by your Spirit, we praise you. Amen.

## NEWS OF THE CHURCH

### DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING

Pastoral Benediction

Sending Song “When the Lord’s in You”

**When the Lord's in you, and the Lord's in me,  
there's a bridge between our spirits, wherever we may be.  
'Til we meet again let us hold the Mystery  
of the Lord in you and me.**

(Used with permission. Crosswinds Music, Madison WI)

## POSTLUDE

Call to Worship, adapted by H. Molozai; Advent candle lighting, opening prayer, and Prayer of Dedication, from 2020 Offering Guide from The Christmas Fund of the United Church of Christ. Music copyright, CCLI 1779535.

### **NEW NEWS**

**TODAY** after worship until 1:00PM, Pastor Hope will be at the church to receive your gifts for our Christmas Appeal Family. Remember, your gifts should be wrapped, without bows, and labeled with a tag indicating which member of the family your gift is for (such as Family S, Girl 8, Gift 3). If you can’t drop off your gift by 1:00 today, contact Pastor Hope or Karen Wootton (at 815-271-0056 or [kaywool0@yahoo.com](mailto:kaywool0@yahoo.com)) for other arrangements.

**CABINET MEETING** Tomorrow, Dec 14, 7:00PM. If you have business the Cabinet needs to attend to, talk to Pastor Hope or Robert Richardson. Pastor Hope will send out the Zoom link.

**ADVENT PARTY!** Our annual, super-fun-for-all-ages Advent party will be held on Zoom THIS Saturday, December 19. from 4-5PM. We'll play a game or two, sing a carol or two, and generally have a great time together. Everyone should bring at least one Christmas JOKE to share! You can find our Christmas party at Meeting ID 819 6301 8540, Security passcode 556285. Pastor Hope will send a reminder with the direct link later this week.

**THE CHRISTMAS FUND OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST** One of our annual offerings for the wider United Church of Christ. The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the UCC for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. Over the past nine months, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the emergency financial needs of many who serve the church have increased dramatically. In such a time as this, the need for the Christmas Fund is more urgent than ever. You may make a contribution to the Christmas Fund by marking your check or envelope accordingly. Thank you!

**CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP PLANS** At this time, we plan to share a pre-recorded Christmas Eve worship service that will feature many of your dear church members in worship leadership. Stay tuned for more details about what time that worship service will be shared.

**DO THESE THINGS NOW** 😊

**GIFT CARDS** Get your remaining 2020 gift card orders in to Penny Kraft **BY TOMORROW**, Dec 14. Contact Penny at [mriapk@gmail.com](mailto:mriapk@gmail.com) or 815-236-6172. View the whole list of all 698 vendors at <https://shop.shopwithscrip.com/shop/product/browse>

**ADVENT GREETING VIDEO CHALLENGE** Send in a photo or a brief video of yourself or your family for Pastor Hope to share with the congregation. We'd love to see you with your church Advent wreath, with your Christmas tree, or however you are managing this month! A brief video to wish the congregation merry Christmas would be fine too. Email those to [pastorhope@richmonducc.org](mailto:pastorhope@richmonducc.org) by Dec 16<sup>th</sup>!

**ONGOING NEWS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

**ZOOM BIBLE STUDY** meets at 2:00 this Tuesday afternoon on Zoom. Everyone is welcome to join in this weekly discussion of the Bible text for the coming Sunday; we just read the Bible together and stop and explore the story – no advanced homework necessary! Contact Pastor Hope for the meeting link.

**SUNDAY SCHOOL BUT ON A SATURDAY** We joyfully continue holding weekly Sunday school on Zoom from 10:30-11:00 each Saturday morning. The kids have a good time seeing each other and hearing some of the great Bible stories. If you have a school-aged child in your household, we'd love to have you attend. **This Saturday is our last class of 2020!**

## **PRAYERS FOR DECEMBER 13, 2020**

*Names are added to our prayer list when shared with Pastor Hope or by contacting the church office ([office@richmonducc.org](mailto:office@richmonducc.org)). We will leave a person on our list for four weeks, unless asked to leave them on longer.*

If you have prayer updates or announcements to share, please send them to BOTH Pastor Hope ([pastorhope@richmonducc.org](mailto:pastorhope@richmonducc.org)) AND our office manager, Brandi Pletcher ([office@richmonducc.org](mailto:office@richmonducc.org)).  
THANKS!

**JOYS: Birthdays:** DeAnn Workman (12/10)

### **CONCERNS**

Molozaiy family friend, Lee, who has lost both his daughter and wife to COVID-19 in the past couple weeks

Marti Swanson's friend, Sandy, and Sandy's family

Those awaiting test results

Carol Sligting

Bill Haase

Carol Sligting's great-grandson, Aiden

Lee and Linda Swenson and family

Deann Workmon

### **Ongoing Prayers:**

Sarah Richardson, Rob and Carol's daughter-in-law, pregnant with twins

School teachers, staff, and administrators; school children and their parents, including college students

Those whose household relationships are strained

Those whose employment has been lost or put in jeopardy due to the pandemic

Those who wait in self-quarantine after exposure to COVID-19

Healthcare workers, especially Cheryl Kazimier's niece and Rob Rummel's daughter-in-law

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:**

Ruthann Walters (Indiana)

Mercedes Ahlgrim (New Mexico)

Sharon Mensing (Sterling)

June Whitney (at home)