

**Welcome to the Community Church of Richmond
United Church of Christ
Our Church at Worship on the Second Sunday of Advent
The Sunday of Peace
December 6, 2020 10:00 A.M.**

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

Tune into Facebook at 10:00 on Sunday to share this time of worship. If you can't join promptly at 10:00, the video will be available later as well.

You can access that video even if you don't have a Facebook account – just type in <https://www.facebook.com/CommunityChurchOfRichmond/>

As you come to worship, we encourage you to have the Advent candles set up that we handed out last week and to light two purple candles with the candlelighters in the service. If you didn't get Advent candles, we have plenty. Call the office to arrange a pick-up or drop-off.

Today we join in the sacrament of communion, so as you come to worship, bring a slice of bread, a roll, a Christmas cookie... and a cup of juice – apple, orange, grape, coffee bean... Bring them prepared to share them with Christ in this time.

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD

GATHERING SONG

“Everlasting God”

Penny Kraft & Kim May

Verse: **Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord, we will wait upon the Lord.
Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord, we will wait upon the Lord.**

Bridge: **Our God, You reign forever. Our hope, our strong Deliv'rer.**

Chorus: **You are the everlasting God, the everlasting God,
You do not faint, You won't grow weary.
You're the defender of the weak, You comfort those in need;
You lift us up on wings like eagles.**

Repeat from beginning

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WORDS OF WELCOME

Rev. Hope Molozaiy

CALL TO WORSHIP from Psalm 85

ONE: We come to worship God who has looked favorable on God's people. Let us hear what God the Lord will speak, for God will speak peace to God's people, to the faithful, to those who turn to God in their hearts. Surely God's salvation is at hand for those who fear God and God's glory will dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss. The Lord will give what is good and we will reap God's peace.

LIGHTING THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE, THE CANDLE OF PEACE

Eric and Julie Leighninger

One: Even now, the Peaceful One is drawing near.

Two: Even now, the day of our salvation is at hand.

One: The God who comforts us speaks tenderly to her people.

Two: The Shepherd who feeds us longs to take us into his arms.

One: While we watch and wait for steadfast love and faithfulness to meet,

Two: while we wonder if justice and peace will ever kiss,

One: we can prepare the way of the Lord.

Two: We can clear a path for him in our hearts and in the world.

One: In these days of setback and struggle, we choose to prepare and not to despair.

Two: In a world drunk on wealth and power, we choose to walk the path of peace.

One: For such a time as this, the Holy One comes speaking peace.

Two: For such a time as this, we are called to make peace.

One: Get ready! Our Savior comes.

Two: Get ready! The peace of Christ is given for one and for all.

The first candle is lit.

All: For such a time as this, kindle our hope.

The second candle is lit.

All: For such a time as this, fill us with your peace.

OPENING PRAYER

Prince of Peace, for our tendency to say ‘peace, peace’ instead of doing the work of peace-making, forgive us. Nurture our longing for true peace that comes through justice. Prepare our hearts, that we might fully receive the peace you offer us through Christ. Make us instruments of your peace. Amen.

HYMN “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” sung by Robert Richardson and Kim May

Verse 1:

Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye saints arise, join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

Verse 2:

Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see; hail the incarnate deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

Verse 3:

Hail the heav'n born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings,
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us all from earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Tune MENDELSSOHN 7.7.7.D. with refrain | From Felix Mendelssohn's Festgesang 1840
Arr. William H Cummings, 1855 Music CCLI License No. 1908882

ADVENT PRAYER FROM THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WORD FOR ALL AGES

SCRIPTURE READING

The Gospel according to Luke 1:26-38 (NRSV)

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 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. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 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. 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. For nothing will be impossible with God." 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.

MESSAGE For Such a Time as This: Peace in the Storm

HYMN "When Peace Like A River"

Verse 1: **When peace, like a river, upholds me each day
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, you have taught me to say,
"It is well, it is well with my soul."**

Refrain: It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.

Verse 2: **Though evil should tempt me, though trials should come,
let this blessed assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And has paid life and blood for my soul:**

Refrain: It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.

Verse 3: **My sin - oh, the bliss of this glorious thought -
My sin not in part, but in whole,
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more.
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!**

Refrain: It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.

Verse 4: **O God, speed the day that is filled with your light,
When clouds are rolled back as a scroll;
The trumpet shall sound and the Lord shall appear,
Even so, it is well with my soul.**

Refrain: It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.

#438, The New Century Hymnal; Tune: VILLE DU HAVRE 11.8.11.9 w/refrain, Philip P. Bliss 1876

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

adapted from liturgy by Maren Tirabassi, at giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com

Invitation

A story is told that during the Blitz in World War II Britain, when the city was bombed relentlessly, Operation Pied Piper evacuated many children to the country, but some remained in London and many of those were orphans. Some were sheltered in a Jesuit order of brothers, who noticed the children had trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, night after night. When the children were being put to bed one night, one of the brothers guessed the children's problem was that they were anxious because of uncertainty in their lives, and gave each child a small piece of bread, saying something like this – "Hold on to your piece of bread while you are sleeping. Remember when you woke up this morning, we fed you and took care of you. When you wake up tomorrow, and we will be here for you. Let the bread remind you of this. Good night, children." The children slept.

*Come now, to be comforted in the story of Bethlehem, which means "House of Bread."
Come to be comforted at this table by a handful of bread and a cup of love, that will stay with you always.*

Words of Remembering

O, we remember and give thanks that God is our Maker, and we are the sheep of God's pasture. We remember that through prophets and disciples, from the ancient times, God has promised "Emmanuel," which is "God with us," and a branch of new life from Jesse's root; promised a Leader, Wisdom, Monarch, Key of all that is locked, and Dawn of every morning.

We remember that no storm, no rebellion, no sin could cause God to take back that promise. And we remember the sacred story, that happened in Bethlehem, for a new mother and a fostering father, sheep and shepherds, a few wise travelers with gifts, and many, many angels. And we remember that the baby named Jesus, grew up to heal people, and teach them with strange parables, that made them angry.

At Passover he broke unleavened bread and shared it, that his very being might become a dwelling place for us all;
he poured wine and love freely, inviting them all to share in the new covenant of his life and love,
so that all may live in peace, and be comforted,
and be led forth in peace, and also hope and joy and love.

Prayer of Consecration – Place your hands over the bread and cup you have before you as you pray:

**Emmanuel, God with us,
in our lonely nights, under our guiding stars,
with the hopes and fears of all our years,
we come for comfort,
for peace of mind and peace on earth,
for a blessing on our hands and the bread in them,
on our lips and the cup we lift to it.
May this bread and cup be your holy Life, that we may ponder in our hearts,
as we pray in our community ...**

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.

We Share the Elements

Leader: The Holy Child of Bethlehem descends to us, and is born in us in these days,
so let us share the bread.

We hear the Christmas angels their great glad tidings tell,
so let us drink deeply, knowing that Christ abides with us.

Eat and drink what is before you as you share your table with Christ.

Prayer of Thanksgiving (unison)

**God, we give you thanks that you have come to us
– in the child of Bethlehem, in this bread and cup,
and in your answer to all of our hopes.
Thank you that you offer of peace:
deeper than any truce, truer than every upheaval around us.
You have comforted us with your promise and your presence;
now we too may spread the welcome wings of your good tidings. Amen.**

HYMN “Come, O Long-Expected Jesus” #122

Verse 1:

**Come, O long excepted Jesus, born to set all people free;
From our fears and sins release us; grant us your true liberty.**

Verse 2:

**Israel's strength and consolation, hope to all the earth impart;
Dear desire of every nation, enter every longing heart.**

Verse 3:

**Born all people to deliver, born a child, you came to reign!
Born to rule on earth forever, come, be known to us again.**

Verse 4:

**By your own eternal Spirit, come to claim us as your own;
By your all sufficient merit, let us share your cross and crown.**

#122, The New Century Hymnal; Tune: STUTTGART 8.7.8.7, Melody attrib. to Chrisitan F. Witt (1660-1716) from Psalmodia Sacra, Gotha, 1715
Alternate tune: IN BABILONE

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.

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. Molozaiy; 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

SAVE THE DATE Our annual, super-fun-for-all-ages Advent party will be held on Zoom on 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! More details later.

GIFT CARDS Get your gift card orders in to Penny Kraft this week for holiday gifting! (No later than Dec 14.) Order through Penny at mriapk@gmail.com or 815-236-6172. View the whole list of all 698 vendors at <https://shop.shopwithscrip.com/shop/product/browse>

2021 PLEDGES If you expect to make a pledge to the church for 2021, please try to have your pledge in to the church this week. Cabinet meets on Monday, the 14th, and it will help us to have as accurate a picture as possible of the expected financial situation.

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 by Dec 16th!

WHAT ABOUT THAT CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY?

To date, we've had 31 responses to the congregational survey, which has covered a wide range of our active congregation members. Here are some of the results and trends:

74% of people who responded are worshipping online with us a few times a month or more, and mostly doing so at the live worship time of 10:00 on Sundays.

In response to what's made online worship meaningful, most answers related to seeing the sanctuary, including multiple people and voices in worship, and chatting with others in the comments during worship.

77% of those who responded are still feeling 'connected' or 'very connected' to the church and its mission.

In response to the question about our individual intentions to return to in-person worship, we pretty much came down 50/50 on whether we expect to return as soon as such worship is offered or not.

As far as when we think in-person should be offered again, we understandably have a range of thoughts: Many people are looking toward a trusted vaccine (33%) or a time when we can all worship together without restrictions based on age or health (22%). 9% of those who responded do believe we should be worshipping in-person now.

There is moderate interest in in-person fellowship or Spiritual Growth gatherings.

In response to what one thing we should make happen for our church in the coming months, our desire is to find safe ways to gather in-person, either by allowing small groups into worship (49%) or other in-person small groups (32%).

In terms of other things you wanted us to know: Connecting to online worship is feeling particularly difficult for families with children of all ages as well as for a small handful of folks who just don't connect well via the screens – keep those families and folks in your prayers, and if there's someone that you haven't "seen" in church lately, it would mean so much if you would give them a call or write them a note.

The strong majority of our congregation is able to keep a sense of connection through what we're offering, and I'm grateful that is the case. Continue to hold our congregation in prayer, that we might know God is with us, and that we might, even in these strange, hard times, share God's love outside of

our immediate community. Thanks for your time and honesty in replying to this survey; it helps me have a much better feel for how we're doing.

SO, WHAT'S NEXT?

For right now, we will keep on keeping on. The Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ is strongly urging churches to remain at or return to online-only services for the foreseeable future. With positivity rates as they are in McHenry Co and surrounding areas, even very small gatherings are very likely to involve people who are positive with COVID-19. We do not expect to hold any in-person services in December, including for Christmas Eve. I find that hard to say, even though I've been expecting it for months, and even though I firmly believe it is the wise and faithful thing to do. I, and the Worship & Spiritual Growth Ministry, are working hard to provide meaningful December opportunities for you through worship, fellowship, and at-home experiences; I hope you will take advantage of them.

We are talking about how to begin allowing a very small number of people to be in the sanctuary during worship, though I don't expect that to begin before mid-January at the earliest. In the meantime, now that I'm increasing my worship technology skills, I'll continue to try to involve different people in worship leadership, so that we connect with each other that way. And, as always, I'm open to other ideas and conversation.

ONGOING NEWS AND OPPORTUNITIES

CHRISTMAS APPEAL FAMILY As is our tradition, we'll work with the Richmond/Spring Grove Food Pantry to help a family in the community have a merry Christmas as we supply some gifts for "Family S," a family has 4 kids, ages 9 years to 10 months.

- All gifts need to be brought to church by Sunday, Dec 13. We'll be at the building until 1:00PM that day for drop-offs. You can also drop off before that by arranging a time with Pastor Hope or Brandi Pletcher.

- All gifts need to be wrapped and labelled to indicate what family member they're for. (Such as, "Family S, Boy, age 9, Gift 7".)

- If you want to help and haven't been called by a member of Wider Missions, contact Karen Wootton directly at 815-271-0056 or kaywoo10@yahoo.com.

THAT'S MY PAN FUNDRAISER LAST CALL BEFORE THE HOLIDAYS! Check out our church's own website for this fundraiser at <https://www.thatsmypan.biz/communitychurchucc>

There you can look at the LARGE assortment of baking pans, cookie tins, mugs, and SO MUCH MORE that can be personalized in SO MANY ways, and place your order. If you don't want to order online, you can contact Kim May who will take your order. (She's at kimbuh74@gmail.com or 262-903-1419.) You can also support this fundraiser by SHARING this website to friends and family; you can copy it and share in an email. Orders should be placed THIS WEEK.

Some of you have asked if you can simply make a bonus donation to the church if you aren't inspired to order any pans at this time. The answer is OF COURSE! We always welcome any extra donation you're able to share with us. Thank you.

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 While we'd rather be together, we're excited to 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. And you're welcome, as always, to invite a friend to Sunday school.

PRAYERS FOR DECEMBER 6, 2020

Names are added to our prayer list when shared with Pastor Hope or by contacting the church office (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) AND our office manager, Brandi Pletcher (office@richmonducc.org).
THANKS!

CONCERNS

Those awaiting test results
Carol Sligting
Bill Haase
Carol Sligting's great-grandson, Aiden
Pastor Hope's brother, Jacob
Char Kania
Lee and Linda Swenson and family
The many people in our immediate community affected by COVID-19
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)