

December 1, 2024 ~ 11:00 a.m.

First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota



1031 S. Euclid Ave. Sarasota, FL 34237 ~ (941) 953-7044

www.uccsarasota.com

Flowers given by: **Lucy Hedrick** in honor of my grandson,
Thomas Michael Gabriel Hedrick turning three-years-old.

PRELUDE

What Child Is This

arr. Mark Hayes

INVITATION to WORSHIP

adapted from Kate Bowler

One: God, *could* this be the year when we see it?

Many: Your grace arriving like starlight in the night?

One: God, could *this* be the Advent we sense it?

Many: Your fragrant hope like a fresh cut pine?

One: God, could this be the Advent we taste it?

Many: Your delicious, upside down, which is to say right side up, way of justice.

One: In these December days awaken us to Your movement in our lives.

Many: May our hymns, prayer, and praise be guided by You until we step into the straw of the stable and our souls feel their worth.

*OPENING HYMN

Come, O Long-Expected Jesus

#122

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

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

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

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

*OPENING PRAYER

Tending and mending God, You take the fragments of life to craft and create a quilt of fresh expressions. God, take the worn-out, tattered, fraying parts of our life to imagine something new. God, take the forgotten parts of life, that are like sweaters shoved in the back of our dresser drawers, to remind us that You embrace *all* of us. Surprise us with new insights into characters at the manger we *thought* we knew. Surprise us with details that we've missed because we were on autopilot amid all the hustle and bustle. Surprise us with *hope* we need now more than ever. Seamstress God weave Your presence and promise like a holy thread in lives every day. In the name of the One we await, Jesus the Christ, Amen.

LIGHTING the ADVENT CANDLE of HOPE Unexpected

By Ann Weems

RESPONSE

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

**O come, O come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 55:1-5

Hear, everyone who thirsts; come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your earnings for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. For you shall go out in joy and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle, and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

SERMON

Feast

OFFERING/ANTHEM

People Who Walk in Darkness

Choplin

*DOXOLOGY/PRAAYER OF DEDICATION

**What can I offer, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wise one, I would do my part;
But what can I offer all my heart.**

CELEBRATION of HOLY COMMUNION

One: Let us sing ourselves to the communion table on this first Sunday of Advent.

Hymn:

Of the Parent's Heart Begotten (1, 4, & 5)

#118

Of the Parent's heart begotten when the worlds were yet to be, One there was with no beginning, One who is eternally Source and Ending of all things that have been, and all things that are to be, forever and forever.

Now behold the One whom prophets have foretold for ages long On the faithful scripture, seers and sages in their song; Now the Promised One shines forth!.....Let all earth its praise prolong forever and forever.

Depths and heights break forth in singing, angels, saints make melody, All dominions, every power sing, make new psalms of ecstasy, Let no heart refrain from praising God, celebrate in harmony, forever and forever.

***After** the hymn, you are invited to come forward with the center aisle holding your hands in the form of a cup, receive a bread and grape, and return to your pew by the side aisles. There is gluten free bread in the **center**. Pastor Wes will serve you in the pews for those who wish. Please hold the bread and grape until everyone has been served.*

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE and 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN

With Joy Draw Water

#109

With joy draw water from the spring; salvation's living well. The Holy One is in your midst; glad praises sing and tell!

A shoot has sprung from Jesse's tree; of God the chosen One. A branch of knowledge and of truth; a gift of love has come!

With love the poor will be received; the proud will turn aside; And faithfulness will be a path, and righteousness the guide!

The wolf shall lie down with the lamb; the calf and lion play. God's peace shall dwell within the land; a child shall show the way!

With joy draw water from the spring; salvation's living well. The Holy One is in your midst; glad praises sing and tell!

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Joy to the World

by G.F. Handel/arr. Virgil Fox

ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ December 1, 2024

Thank you to everyone who adopted an Angel for Christmas. If you have questions, please contact Sandy Smith. Remember gifts are due at the church by Sunday, **December 8.**

Stewardship Update: as of this week, we have received **145 pledges totaling \$428,439.** We are still approximately **\$100,000** away from our goal budget for 2025. Thank you to everyone who has turned in your card. If you have not, please consider offering a financial gift for 2025.

CALLING ALL BUCKET FILLERS ~ JOIN A TEAM IN 2025 ~Yes, YOU! We are blessed with so many opportunities to serve. There is joy in doing what we can to make a difference. There is kindness in helping set the table for those in need. There is gratefulness in discovering we can be a team member even if we have limited mobility. We are all called to do what we can where we can. Having a full bucket or cup is a precious gift, one to be shared generously. **Won't you join us? What You Can Do:** Go to: uccsarasota.com; Select: About Us (at the top) and "Organization" from the dropdown menu; Scroll to: "Discover our Church's Organizational Structure ~ Check out the committees, groups and teams to learn more and open the "Statement on Structure" for specific tasks and meeting information. Contact a member of the Nominating Committee for more information: Carol McCloud, Harold Mezile, Nancy Morris

Come one, come all to the annual Women's Association's Christmas luncheon on Tuesday, **December 3,** at 11:30 am. We will fill Christmas bags for shut-in seniors (male and female) in our

community. **Our goal this year is to fill 100 bags** that will be distributed to the residents of Orchard Place and to Meals on Wheels. Cost for lunch is \$15.00. **All are welcome.** Please sign up after Sunday worship or call the church office at 941-953-7044.

Drumming as a Spiritual Practice meets the first and third Tuesday in the **Chapel**. Our next meeting is on **Tues 12/3 at 3:00pm**. **New drummers are welcome;** drums are provided.

Brady Sarasota's 8th annual Vigil for Victims of Gun Violence will be held in our sanctuary on Friday, Dec. 6, at 6 pm. The featured speakers this year will be Parkland parents **Manny and Patricia Oliver**, whose son Joaquin was murdered on Valentine's Day 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. More than 45,000 people died in gunfire last year. Since the election, some have asked Brady why keep fighting? Our response: If we can change one mind, pass one good law or save one life, our work will be worth it.

HOLIDAY HELP FOR FAMILY PROMISE ~ Due to the number of families displaced and/or facing damage from the storms, Family Promise currently has 200+ families to whom they are offering support. Not all of these families, are receiving holiday assistance from various organizations. In order to provide resources to those families that have not received assistance or have come to Family Promise too late to receive that help, Family Promise could use gift cards from various stores (grocery, gas, Target, Walmart, VISA). We know there is a lot our church is already doing for the holidays, but if you would like to help, please buy whatever type and number of cards you would like to donate in amounts of \$10 or \$20 and return to the office in an envelope marked for Family Promise or give them to Ellen Marsey by Sunday, December 8.

There is an International Fair-Trade Holiday Sale at **Covenant Mennonite Fellowship Church** (5420 Ashton Rd) on **Saturday, December 7th from 9 a.m. to 2 pm**. Featured items include fair trade jewelry, ornaments, toys, coffee, chocolate, and nativity scenes.

Sacred Conversations on Race ~ **December 10 at 3 p.m.** ~ we will be discussing resources from Bryan Stevenson's Equal Justice Initiative.

Advent Prayer Times: Would you welcome an opportunity to renew your spirit in the Advent Season? Are you feeling anxious about the state of our world? Bring whatever you are carrying in your heart as we prayerfully walk the labyrinth on **December 8 after the 11 a.m. service led by Lindsey Huddleston**. Dress for the weather and wear walking shoes. We will write the names of those you wish to especially remember around the labyrinth. Please provide your names to Sherry by Thursday, December 5th. **Singing our Prayers for Advent Wednesday, December 11th @ 4 p.m.** We will continue to keep the spirit of Advent through our second Singing our Prayers session led by Greg Chestnut. Greg will be selecting hymns that especially resonate with us during this time. Please invite your friends and neighbors to this very special gathering.

Artful Prayer ~ December 12th @ 2 p.m. (Hybrid ~ Zoom or Oasis Center) What does it mean to be "Theotokos" or Godbearer? By Rev. Donna Papenhausen You will need drawing paper, colored pencils, crayons or markers. See Pastor Wes for Zoom link

The UCC Men's breakfast series continues **Saturday, December 14** and all the men of the congregation are invited to join for breakfast in Syster Hall then. Coffee will be on at 8 am and breakfast served at 8:30. **Mike Keane** will share spiritual works he has found helpful and invite us

to share where we have found spiritual inspiration. You may register by Thursday, December 12 by calling Sherry at the church office at 941-953-7044. We hope to see you there!

A Celtic Christmas, December 13th & 14th at First Presbyterian Church. The popular event features a 60-voice choir combining the First Presbyterian Choir and the Via Nova Chorale, along with the acclaimed Lubben Brothers Band, bagpiper Kevin Weigand, and Irish dancer Suzanne Ceasar. Tickets are \$25 in advance, and \$35 at the door, if available. Sponsorships are available for anyone needing help with admission at 941- 955-8119.

COLLAGE Christmas Party for our LGBTQIA+ and Allys will be on December 14 at 6 p.m. at Sandi Armstrong's home (2616 Hawthorn St.) Please RSVP by 12/11/24 to sandiarmstrong@comcast.net and not if you will bring appetizers, side dish or dessert. Ham will be provided. We will have the traditional White Elephant exchange of present (\$15 or less) with Dale Moore and Steve Horowitz helping us out. **All are welcome!!**

Christmas Lights tour ~ join Len and Drue Murray on a festive night of seeing the beautiful lights in our community. You meet at the church at 5:30 and return around 8 p.m. The dates of the tour are **Dec. 17 and Dec. 19** ~ sign up in the narthex ~ space is limited.

Christmas Cookie Extravaganza ~ On Sunday, December 15th, after the 11 a.m. worship service we'll have another COOKIE EXTRAVAGANZA! **Bake a batch of your favorite Christmas cookies and bring them to share** (along with a recipe, if you wish) with the congregation. Hosted by First UCC Women's Group. "Tis the season" – see you there!

THIS WEEK

Sunday, December 1 ~ First Sunday of Advent and Holy Communion

9 a.m. ~ Early Service

11 a.m. ~ Worship, Sanctuary and Online

Noon ~ Fellowship Time ~ Birthday Sunday

Monday, December 2

Facilities and Grounds Team, 10 a.m., Oasis and Zoom

Racial Justice Mission Group, 11 a.m., Zoom

Food and Hunger Group, 11:30 a.m. Oasis and Zoom

SURE Research Kickoff, Trinity Christian Fellowship

Tuesday, December 3

UCC Women Board Meeting, 10:30 a.m., Syster Hall

UCC Christmas Brunch, 11:30 a.m., Syster Hall

Drumming as a Spiritual Practice, 3 p.m., Chapel

Tuesday Night Bible Study, 6:30 p.m., Zoom

Wednesday, December 4

Lay Visitation Ministry, 10 a.m., Chapel

Bible Study, 11 a.m., Oasis Center and Zoom

Choir, 7 p.m., Chapel

Thursday, December 5

Director of Music Search Team, 3:30 p.m.

Friday, December 6

Brady Vigil, 6 p.m., Sanctuary

Sunday, December 8 ~ Second Sunday of Advent

9 a.m. ~ Early Service

11 a.m. ~ Worship, Sanctuary and Online

Noon ~ Fellowship Time ~ National Brownie Day

Noon ~ ADVENT PRAYER on the LABYRINTH