

December 8, 2024 ~ 11:00 a.m.

# First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota



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

[www.uccsarasota.com](http://www.uccsarasota.com)

**December 8, 2024**

**11:00 a.m.**

Flowers given by: **Lucy Hedrick**, in honor of her son, **Dr. Tod Hedrick**, earning his Ph.D. in Musicology from the City University of New York Graduate Center

PRELUDE

*Wachet auf*

J. S. Bach

INVITATION to WORSHIP

adapted from Kate Bowler

One: Blessed are we gathered awake and aware of God's on-going, unfolding plot.

Many: **Blessed are we when we rise up to part-taking in God's story.**

One: Blessed are we when we let go of our isolated individualism,

Many: **Blessed are we when we join our voices in harmony of holy togetherness.**

One: Let us sing to our Creator who is still composing and conducting!

Many: **Let us sing ourselves closer to Bethlehem.**

\*OPENING HYMN

*Awake!, Awake, and Greet the New Morn*

#107

**Awake! awake, and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning, sing out your joy, for Jesus is born, behold! the Child of our longing. Come as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together, to open wide the heavenly door, and lives now inside us forever.**

**To us, to all in sorrow and fear, Emmanuel comes a singing, whose humble song is quiet and near, yet fills the earth with its ringing. Music to heal the broken soul and hymns of loving kindness, the thunder of the anthems roll to shatter all hate and injustice.**

**In deepest night Christ's coming shall be, when all the world is despairing, as morning light so quiet and free, so warm and gentle and caring. One without voice breaks forth in song, a lame one leaps in wonder, the weak are raised above the strong, and weapons are broken asunder.**

**Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night, though cold the winter and cheerless, the rising sun shall crown you with light, be strong and loving and fearless; Love be our song and love our prayer, and love, our endless story, may God fill every day we share, and bring us at last into glory.**

\*OPENING PRAYER

**God of light that can flicker and fade, but is *never* extinguished, continue to help us prepare a place for You to enter anew this year. It is easy to get caught up in the busyness and miss Your holiness. Like the crowded streets of Bethlehem full of jostling and shouting, our Advents have become hectic. We have accepted calendars overflowing, exhaustion, overwhelm, and racing around as what is "normal". "Tis the season," we say, as we grab a sugar cookie darting off to another concert, party, lunch, or gathering of some sort. Have we already missed Your arrival, O God? Because we know that You come disguised as our life. Clear out the clutter and chaos as You did on that marvelous, mysterious night centuries ago. Let Your shalom, peace, wholeness be like a cup of hot chocolate to our souls every day this week. Amen.**

LIGHTING the ADVENT CANDLE of PEACE

RESPONSE

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

**O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;  
Bid envy, strife, and discord cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 60:1-6

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples, but the Lord will arise upon you, and God's glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light and leaders to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together; they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried in their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you; the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

SERMON

Being Light

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.**

OFFERING/ANTHEM

*E'en So Lord Jesus Quickly Come*

Paul Manz

\*DOXOLOGY/PRAYER 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.**

\*CLOSING HYMN

*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

#160

**Hark! the herald angels sing, Jesus, the light of the world; Glory to the Christ-child bring,  
Jesus, the light of the world.**

*Refrain* **We will follow the light, the beautiful light, come where the dewdrops of mercy  
are bright Shine all around us by day and by night, Jesus, the light of the world.**

**Joyful, all you saints arise, Jesus, the light of the world; Join the triumph of the skies,  
Jesus, the light of the world. Refrain**

**Christ, by highest heaven adored, Jesus, the light of the world; Christ, the everlasting  
Word, Jesus, the light of the world. Refrain**

**Hail the Bearer of God's peace! Jesus, the light of the world; Hail the Sun of righteousness! Jesus, the light of the world. Refrain**

\*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

*Sing We Now of Christmas*  
(Choral arrangement)

John Leavitt  
arr. Glenn Priest

**ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ December 8, 2024**

Stewardship Update: as of this week, we have received **157 pledges totaling \$455,099**. **While we are getting closer to meeting our budget, there is a gap.** 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. **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

**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. 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.

You are cordially invited to participate in the **2024 Kwanzaa celebration by the African American Cultural Resource Center (AACRC)** at the Betty J Johnson North Sarasota Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd on **Tuesday, December 10, 2024 @5-7:30pm**. We truly appreciate your interest and participation in our Kwanzaa celebration. The name Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase "matunda ya kwanza" which means first fruits in Swahili. Each family celebrates Kwanzaa in its own way, but celebrations often include songs, dances, African Drums, storytelling, poetry, reading, and a large meal. On each of the seven nights, the family gathers and a child lights the candles on the Kinara (candleholder), then one of the seven principles is discussed. The seven-day candle lighting ceremony and celebration follows: December 26: Umoja - (unity); December 27: Kujichagulia - (self-determination); December 28: Ujima - (collective work & responsibility); December 29: UJAMAA - (cooperative

Economics); December 30: Nia - (purpose); December 31: Kuumba - (creativity); January 1: Imani - (Faith)

Sacred Conversations on Race ~ **December 11 at 3 p.m.** ~ we will be discussing resources from Bryan Stevenson's Equal Justice Initiative.

Advent Prayer Times: **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, 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.

**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.

**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](mailto: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 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!

**Drumming as a Spiritual Practice** meets the first and third Tuesday in the **Chapel**. Our next meeting is on **Tues 12/17 at 3:00pm**. **New drummers are welcome**; drums are provided.

**CHRISTMAS EVE ~ 4:00 p.m.** ~ Pre-service music begins at **3:45** with guest musicians, **Betsy Hudson-Traba**, flute, and **Fernando Traba**, bassoon. On this holy night, we will blend poetry by soaking in God's love. **7:00 p.m.** ~ Pre-service music at **6:40** with guest musicians **Natalie Helm**, cellist, and **Meghan Jones**, violinist. Our Chancel Choir will share special anthems and carols. Our children, youth and families will process the figures of the creche. With a holy hum that hovers throughout the entire service, we celebrate God's arrival in our hearts, homes, and world. **THIS SERVICE WILL BE LIVESTREAMED.** **11:00 p.m.** ~ Arrive early at **10:40** to hear the beautiful pre-service music of cello, violin, and organ. Featured guest musicians from the Sarasota Orchestra are **Natalie Helm** and **Meghan Jones**. Communion will be celebrated at this service and as the seconds tick toward Midnight we join our voices in singing, "Silent Night" for all Sarasota to hear.

### **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**

### **Monday, December 9**

Finance Meeting, 3 p.m., Zoom

### **Tuesday, December 10**

Community Kwanzaa Celebration at the Betty J Johnson Library, 5 p.m.

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

### **Wednesday, December 11**

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

Sacred Conversations on Race, 3 p.m., Oasis Center and Zoom

Singing our prayers for Advent, 4 p.m., Chapel

Choir, 7 p.m., Chapel

### **Thursday, December 12**

Safety Team, 9:30 a.m., Oasis Center and Zoom

Artful Prayer, 2 p.m., Oasis Center and Zoom

### **Saturday, December 14**

Men's Breakfast, 8 a.m., Syster Hall

COLLAGE Christmas Party, 6 p.m., Sandi Armstrong's home

### **Sunday, December 15 ~ Third Sunday of Advent**

9 a.m. ~ Early Service

11 a.m. ~ Worship, Sanctuary and Online

Noon ~ Fellowship Time ~ **COOKIE EXTRAVAGANZA!!**