

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF LACONIA  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

DECEMBER 1, 2024 9:30 A.M.

*AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING AND JUST PEACE CHURCH*

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -*

*And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -*

*I've heard it in the chillest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.*

*-Emily Dickinson*

## Prelude

## Welcome and Greeting

### Introit

### Isaiah the Prophet Has Written of Old

### Call to Worship\*\*

It doesn't matter whether or not you can have faith; whether or not you are cynical or despairing, hope-filled or hope-less: what matters to God is simply that you are here.

**We are entering the time of Advent, in preparation for Christmas. Advent reminds us that if God is to be born again in the most ordinary parts of our world and our lives that we need prepare for it.**

We need to make the space in our lives where love might be born.

**Together, let us practice being ready in the faith that Christ will come.**

### Hymn 117

### Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates

### Lighting of the First Advent Candle

A reading from the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 33, verses 14-16.

*The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."*

During Advent, we remember the time before Jesus' birth; before God sent a light into this world to guide us on the path of discipleship. Yet even before the first spark, we had to trust that there were more than the shadows that surrounded us. We dedicated ourselves to the hope given us through the prophets. For hope must be the beginning: it is the recognition of the gloom in which we live, and the deliberate belief that the shadows are not our only reality. It is the seeking of the heart towards the ways that will bring us to God. It is the first spark of faith, glowing bravely despite the odds.

Let us pray:

**Loving God, as we enter this Advent season, we confess all the hidden, shadowy places in our lives and memories. We acknowledge all the places where, however unintentionally, we are fearful, suspicious, and closed off one from another.**

**Open our hearts, we pray, that faith may take root. Show us the creative power of hope. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you, whose forgiveness we depend on. Turn us by grace, that we may come to walk in the light of Christ. Amen.**

### Passing the Peace

### Sung Response:

**Amen, Amen, Amen**

**Sermon****Prayers of the People****Invitation to the Table****Communion Prayer**

Creator God, before the world had yet come into being, your breath stirred the void, sending ripples through the nothingness. You infused all that came into existence with divinity, and the promise of your abiding throughout time. Your sacred spirit formed into the light that illuminates our lives, into the water that connects us to all life, into the breath that animates us and joins us to your ongoing Creation. Through cycles of life and death, endings and beginnings, we dwell in communion with all that you have made: dust and stardust brought together in the world we know so well.

In the fullness of time, you sent Jesus Christ - one of us, and yet entirely of you - to show us anew the sparks of Creation-light that glow within us. In our discipleship, we gathered the light into community; we learned to see the light in the excluded, we nurtured the little glimmers that pull us back to you. In Christ's love, we learned anew the warmth that opens us to the community of disciples, healing the long-broken splinters of our lives.

For the breath that moved Creation into being continues to swirl through

**Prayer of Our Savior**

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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

**Blessing of the Elements****Sharing of the Elements**

*All of the elements are gluten-free and non-alcoholic.*

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**

In these short days, when sunlight is scarce and the shadows are long, we give thanks for the hope that reminds us that all will not be lost. The shadows will not have the final word. We give thanks for the hope that comes to us as softly as a perching bird. We give thanks for the hope that we have to cling to, white-knuckling our way towards a promise we cannot yet see. We give thanks for the accompaniment of other seekers, for the communion we share in our seeking, and for the love made manifest here, in bread and in cup, that takes our tiny sparks of hope and joins them into a light that illuminates the world. Amen.

## Call to Offering

Offertory

Comfort, Comfort, Ye My People

Genevan Psalter

## Doxology

*To God, all glorious heavenly light,  
To Christ, revealed in earthly night,  
To God the Spirit now we raise  
Our hopeful songs of thankful praise.*

## Prayer of Dedication\*\*\*

**Giving God, we give you thanks and praise for all of your gifts to us. We know that you are the source of every good thing, light and love come from you. You have created us, and you continue to breathe life into us through the power of your Holy Spirit. You have given us so much, and it is because we recognize the gifts you have given to us that we now give to the work of your kingdom. We now dedicate this offering to the work of your kingdom here on earth. May this collection be used wisely and diligently, that your love may be made known through us, and to all Creation. Amen.**

Closing Hymn 122

Come, O Long-Expected Jesus

## Benediction

Choral Response

Go In Peace

## Postlude

\*\*adapted from a prayer written by Cheryl Lawrie and posted on [hold this space].

<http://holdthisspace.org.au/all-of-who-we-are/>

\*\*\*written by Joanna Harader, and posted on her **Spacious Faith** blog. <http://spaciousfaith.com/>

## Altar Flowers

Given by John and Margie Kreitler . In anticipation of the excitement this Advent season will bring to all of us.

Book Club - December 18th 10:00a.m. in the Library

**Small things like these** by Claire Keegan

Women's Breakfast December 18th, 8:30am at the Water Street Cafe

please RSVP to [bettobergstrom@gmail.com](mailto:bettobergstrom@gmail.com)

Men's Breakfast November 29th at the Water Street Cafe