

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF LACONIA
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

DECEMBER 15, 2024 9:30 A.M.

AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING AND JUST PEACE CHURCH



Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Introit

Gentle Joseph, Joseph Dear

Lighting of the Christ Candle

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 101

Comfort, Comfort O My People

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Isaiah, chapter 40: verses 3-5

·A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ·Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ·Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

The glow of a candle is warming to us. It can warm our bodies, but even more, it can warm our hearts. It is such a little thing, insignificant in the larger scheme of things, yet the joy that this small flame can produce can flood through us, can radiate outwards from us, can produce illumination far beyond the light of a tiny flame. One spark, one seemingly insignificant act, can spread and multiply; like joy, flames are not diminished when they are shared. God's joy, carried within us, spreads light, spreads warmth to all whom we encounter, no matter how cold the night at this time of year.

Let us pray:

Merciful God, slow us down, we pray. Halt our feet as we rush through the cold of these short days, lift our faces to see what lies before us. Grant us the stillness of the season, that we may see you. May we see your beauty in the twinkling lights. May we see your radiance in the face of a child's enthusiasm. May we see your expansive hope in the clear brilliance of the winter sky. May we see your peace in the warmth of lighted windows, as we welcome guests or are welcomed as guests. In stillness, in calm, in quiet, may your holy joy fill us to bursting, until we cannot help but sing praises to the light that overcomes the shadows, to the warmth that overcomes the cold, to the God whose love is beyond all understanding. Amen.

Sung Response

*Come, festively sing while awaiting the birth,
join angels in dancing from heaven to earth.
Wave banners of good news, lift high thankful praise,
One candle is lit for the joy of these days.*

Passing the Peace

Sung Response

Amen, Amen, Amen

Anthem

A Carol for Advent

Gilbert Martin

Sermon

Prayers of the People

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.

Mission in Motion Moment

Offertory

Creation Will Be at Peace

Words, Paul Williamson-Music, Anna Laura Page

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. Amen.*

Prayer of Dedication

Sometimes it feels like the offerings we put in the plate, the food we put in the pantry, the little things that we can do in our day-to-day cannot possibly change the world. Our giving feels like drops in a bucket, and sometimes it seems as though the bucket has a leak.

Grant us the courage, God of mercy, not to give in to despair and overwhelm. May we dedicate ourselves to the hope of little things: to the faith that the drops in the bucket will become something greater. Help us to trust that the love we pour forth, in our time, our talent, and our treasure, are enough to change the world, even in tiny ways. Amen.

Hymn 120

There's a Voice in the Wilderness

Benediction

Benediction Response

Christ Be Our Light

Postlude

****adapted from a prayer written by Cheryl Lawrie and posted on [hold this space].**
<http://holdthisspace.org.au/all-of-who-we-are/>

Christmas can come with many mixed feelings. In the midst of joy and holiday lights, this season can also make us miss those we've lost, or grieve the circumstances of our lives as they are. If you are in need of a bit of comfort this holiday season, please join us on December 17th at 7pm in the sanctuary.

Altar Flowers

Given by Bob and Carolyn Hunt, in loving memory of Bob's father, Robert B. Hunt.

Many thanks to all that brought food and smiles and comfort while I was out sick.
Janet Simmon

Book Club - December 18th 10:00a.m. in the Library
Small Things Like These by Claire Keegan

Join us after Book Club on Wednesday, Dec. 18th for a fun and lively hour to sing Christmas Carols and celebrate the season together. 11:30 in the Church Hall. We'll share some holiday snacks and then enjoy singing-a-long with Lorraine Barrows on the piano!

Women's Breakfast December 18th, 8:30am at the Water Street Cafe
please RSVP to bettobergstrom@gmail.com
Men's Breakfast December 27th at the Water Street Cafe