

Christ Congregational United Church of Christ
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E-mail: christch@bellsouth.net
Web site: www.christcongregationalucc.org
The Rev. Candace Thomas, Designated-Term Pastor
Jay Harragin, Director of Music
Karen Kett, Liturgist

Our Vision: A church that listens, praises God, inspires, and serves others.
December 20, 2020 – 10:30 a.m.
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Christmas Fund Offering

Preparation for Worship
“We are all meant to be mothers of God.”
Meister Eckart, 14th century



PRELUDE: “Mary, Did You Know?”

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*CALL TO WORSHIP (*responsive*)

One: Into our tumultuous times, the Love of God breaks in.

Many: Into our fearful times, the glory of God is revealed.

One: Sometimes it announces itself.

Many: Other times we must look high and low.

One: Sometimes we recognize it.

Many: Other times we walk right past it, lost in ourselves.

One: Love’s in need of willing hearts.

Many: Love’s in need of the smallest opening.

One: Greetings, favored ones! God’s Love is with you.

Many: Here? Now? How can that be?

One: Be not afraid. With God, nothing is impossible.

Many: Love is knocking at the door.

One: Be not afraid. The Mighty One will do great things.

Many: Who can say what awesome thing God is up to now?

One: Arise and shine, beloveds. God's Love wants to be born in you.

Many: Here we are, servants of the Lord. Let it be so.

(The fourth candle is lit; the purple candle—LOVE)

**ALL: ALL: FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS, MAY YOUR LOVE BE BORN IN US.
AMEN.**

***CAROL: "O How Shall I Receive You" (No. 102, NCH)**

**O how shall I receive you, how meet you on your way,
Blessed hope of every people, my soul's delight and stay?
O Jesus, Jesus, give me now by your own pure light,
To know what-e'er is pleasing and welcome in your sight.**

**Love caused your incarnation; love brought you unto me;
Your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty.
O love beyond all telling, that led you to embrace
in love, all love excelling, our lost and fallen race.**

**You, come, O Christ, with gladness, in mercy and goodwill,
To bring an end to sadness and bid our fears be still.
In patient expectation we live for that great day
When a renewed creation your glory shall display.**

***THE COMMANDMENT OF JESUS (*John 15:5, 12*)**

I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION (Unison)

Surprising God, you make your presence known in unexpected ways, and challenge our comfortable assumptions about how you work. Meet us here today and open our hearts to recognize you in our midst, calling us to live into your new thing: a world where your love takes shape in justice and peace. In the name of the One who is coming, we pray, Amen.

SCRIPTURE LESSON:

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, favoured 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 favour 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.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SPECIAL MUSIC "The Christmas Song" Mel Torme & Robert Wells

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Unison)

From the fear that keeps us from answering your call, liberate us. From our attachment to the way things have always been, deliver us. From the despair that is unable to see a new thing breaking forth, save us. For every time we've said "no" to Love, forgive us, and open our hearts wide to receive you anew. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON-Pastor

God knows our hearts and is glad when our words and actions show that we have turned to a better way. Know that through God's love and grace your sins are forgiven!

PRAYER SONG: "Come, O Long-Expected Jesus" (verse 1) (NCH, No.122)

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

PASTORAL PRAYER

THE PRAYER OF JESUS(Unison)

We join our hearts together as we pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.

Amen

OFFERING INVITATION

On this day we magnify the Lord for the great things God has done through unlikely people and in unexpected ways, we give thanks that we, too, by God's Spirit, can do great things. We, too, can lift up those who are laid low. We, too, can fill the hungry with good things. We, too, through our open-hearted generosity, can proclaim that nothing will be impossible with God. We can do all of that and more by contributing to the Christmas Fund of the UCC Pension Boards. Our contributions will help retired clergy, church staff, and their survivors pay bills, maintain health insurance, and meet emergency needs. Our contributions tell our former pastors and church staff members that they are not forgotten, that they are loved, that they and their ministries are appreciated and remembered. For Love's sake, let's give generously

PRAYER OF DEDICATION:(Unison)

Holy One who scatters the proud and lifts up the lowly, Mighty One who fills the hungry and sends the rich away empty: Receive these, our humble gifts. Bless them, that by your Spirit they might bring hope and healing, encouragement and joy, sustenance and love. Amen.

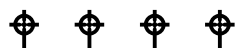
MUSICAL OFFERING: “Christmas Medley” arr Bryan & Harragin

MESSAGE: “LOVE RULES” Pastor Candy Thomas

CLOSING HYMN: “Love Came Down at Christmas” (No. 165, NCH)

**Love came down at Christmas
Love, a lovely love divine
Love was born at Christmas
Stars and angels gave the sign.**

**Love will be our token
Love be yours, and love be mine
Love from God to all of us
Love for plea and gift a sign.**



Welcome to Everyone!

*Whoever or whatever brought you to our on-line worship service this morning, we believe that the Spirit of God had a hand in you joining us. We hope that you feel the Holy Spirit in our service of prayer and praise. At Christ Congregational Church we strive to love one another as God has loved us and welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us. Therefore, we are an **Open and Affirming** church, loving and welcoming all people in all of God’s variety; including racial, ethnic, and economic diversity, gender diversity and expression, sexual orientation, and physical and mental abilities.*

JOYS AND CONCERNS – Please let Pastor Candy know of any joys or concerns you would like lifted up in worship by notifying her by Sunday morning at 10 a.m. via phone, text or email.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING (Veterans of the Cross) will be received this morning and on Christmas Eve.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP will take place on Thursday, December 24th at 4 p.m. in the Garden Chapel. It will also be live-streamed on Facebook.

Donations of non-perishable food continue to be accepted to be given away at The Church of the Open Door, UCC, Liberty City. The need is great!

You may contribute to Christmas gifts for children of our Guardian Ad Litem volunteers through today.

A service of celebration and thanksgiving to God for the life of Bill McDowell will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, January 9, 2021, in the Sanctuary. Pandemic protocols will be followed. The worship service will also be live-streamed on Facebook.

PRIME TIME, EVERY Sunday, from 9:00-9:45 a.m.

We will continue to discuss the book:

"An Altar in the World"

A Geography of Faith"

by Barbara Brown Taylor.

To Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6917354836?pwd=QnNrdE1VWWUvNjMvOWkzU1UwYzdPUT09>

Meeting ID: 691 735 4836

Passcode: 338243

FELLOWSHIP HOUR

VIA ZOOM at 12:30 p.m.

MEETING ID 691 735 4836

PASSWORD 338243

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Board of Christian Ed is suggesting to our youth that they watch and listen to the messages presented by Pastor Candy each Sunday during our live -stream/in-person church services during the month of December. Use this as a spring board for discussion of the Advent season. Ms. Judy also emailed some suggestions for fun activities in which families could engage as we prepare for the birth of the Christ. Sunday School on zoom will resume after the new year.

from Cindy Ketzle on behalf of the Board of Christian Ed. 12-1-2020

BIBLE STUDY

We will meet on Zoom at 6 p.m. on Mondays.

To Join Zoom Meeting

Sign-in information is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82547685992> Meeting ID: 825 4768 5992 One tap mobile

+13126266799,,82547685992# US (Chicago)

+16468769923,,82547685992# US (New York) Dial by your location

Please stipulate when your giving is other than pledge or plate by letting Judy Carlson or Michelle Simone know.

ONLINE GIVING - We invite you to use our online giving option as a quick, simple and secure method to make your pledges and any ancillary contributions. **Clicking on the “Give Online Today” button at the bottom of this newsletter, or going to our church website at christcongregationalucc.org and clicking “online giving”** will bring you to the secured Moon Clerk site which will allow you to enter your credit card information.

Please let Michelle, our Administrative Assistant, know if there are names you’d like added to the Prayer List She may be e-mailed at christch@bellsouth.net or call her at 305-235-9381. Thanks be to God for prayers answered and for comfort given!

Prayer List:

The family of Gloria Fuller, Gail Kenan, Graham and Carmen Andrew and their entire family, Mr & Mrs Jerry Parks, Linda Dalrymple, Barbara Parker, Lindsay Robertson, Mary Ellen Prather, Frank Tirb, Rosemary Daniels, The Family of Margie Fickes, The Family of Dollie Bryan, Rhonda Johnstone Cepedes, The Family of Ray Radkiewicz, Lauren Kline, Margarita Morell’s sister, All medical professionals and first responders, The Family of Bill McDowell, Wendy Olson, The family of Tula Vernon.

For **Pastoral Care Needs**, please call *Pastor Candy* at 925-640-9289 or you may call or leave a message at the **Church Office, 305-235-9381, Monday-Friday, from 9:30 a.m – 2:30 p.m.** and our Office Administrative Assistant, *Michelle Simone*, will assist you in reaching *Pastor Candy*. **When the office is closed** you may call the **Board of Deacons** Chairperson, *Jim Ketzle*, at 305-495-4452 and he will be able to help you. For **Use of Property Needs** or if you identify a Maintenance Concern call the **Board of Trustees** Chairperson, *Julio Balcells*, 305-282-7882. For **Other General Questions** or Needs call the Church President/Moderator, *Lorrie LeGrand*, 305-978-3801

CALENDAR - December 20, 2020 – December 27, 2020

- Sun. 20** 9 00 a.m. Prime Time ZOOM Meeting
10:30 a.m. Worship in the Garden Chapel in person
& live- streamed on ZOOM
12:30 p.m Fellowship ZOOM
- Mon. 21** 6:00 p.m. Bible Study ZOOM
- Thurs. 24** 4:00 pm Christmas Eve Service, Outdoor Chapel
Church office closed
- Fri. 25** Christmas Day
- Sun. 27** 9:00 a.m. Prime Time ZOOM Meeting
10:30 a.m. Worship in the Garden Chapel in person
& live- streamed on ZOOM



Safety Protocols For Outside Services at Christ Congregational UCC

- In-person worship services held in the Garden Chapel on Sundays at 10:30 a.m.

It is expected that people will attend only if they are well. A photo will be taken of those in attendance in the event that contact tracing is needed. Ushers will obtain contact information from any guest visitors.

Live streaming on Facebook will continue. Worshippers may choose the option with which they are most comfortable.

- All attendees and participants are required to wear masks at all times which cover both mouth and nose.

- Social distancing must be observed at all times**—prior, during, and following the worship service. As much as you would like to extend a welcoming handshake or warm hug, **please don't** out of respect and love for the health of our community.

- An Usher will be stationed at each of the three entrances to the Garden Chapel to assist in seating the congregation.

- Hand sanitizers will be available at each entrance.

- Seating can be on the rock pews or chairs may be brought by congregants if

desired. If cushions are needed for the rock pews they must be brought in as they cannot be provided. If assistance is needed to carry chairs from cars an Usher will help.

- Worship programs will continue to be online each Friday and will also be handed out by Ushers wearing gloves.

- The Kelsey building will remain locked. There will be no refreshments after worship. Water fountains will not be available. Only bathrooms in the linear classroom building will be available.

- A receptacle will be available for offerings.

- Monthly Holy Communion will be observed using individual Celebration pre-packaged elements.

- Trash cans with bag liners will be placed at all exits.

- Live Streaming on Facebook will be continued. ***In case of bad weather, worship will be held in the Sanctuary with doors and glass side walls open.**

