

***Christ Congregational United Church of Christ***  
***A church that listens, praises God, inspires, and serves others.***

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[christch@bellsouth.net](mailto:christch@bellsouth.net)

305-235-9381

**The Rev. Candace Thomas, Designated-Term Pastor**  
**Jay Harragin, Director of Music**  
**Graham Bryan, Musician**  
**Joan Chandler, Liturgist**

**December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – 10:30 a.m.**

**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

***Preparation for Worship: “The good news is as epic as it gets, with universal theological implications, and yet the Bible tells it from the perspective of fishermen and farmers, pregnant ladies and squirmy kids. This story about the nature of God and God’s relationship to humanity smells like mud and manger hay and tastes like salt and wine...It is the biggest story and the smallest story all at once—the great quest for the One Ring and the quiet friendship of Frodo and Sam.” — Rachel Held Evans***



**PRELUDE**

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

Leader: Joy to the world!

**All: Jesus the Christ has come.**

L: We look for the Christ to come again, in words and ways of Hope.

**All: Joy to the world!**

L: We look for the Christ to come again, in words and ways of Peace.

**All: Joy to the world!**

L: We look for the Christ to come again, in words and ways of Love.

**All: Joy to the world!**

**L: We look for the Christ to come again, restoring Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.**

**All: Joy to the world!**

**\*HYMN: "Joy to the World!" (HFG, No. 171)**

**1/ Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
let ev'ry heart prepare him room  
and heav'n and nature sing,  
and heav'n and nature sing,  
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.**

**2/ Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!  
Let men their songs employ,  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**3/ No more let sins and sorrows grow  
nor thorns infest the ground;  
he comes to make his blessings flow  
far as the curse is found,  
far as the curse is found,  
far as, far as the curse is found.**

**4/ He rules the world with truth and grace  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.**

***\*PRAYER OF INVOCATION (Unison)***

**Advent God, you promise us such a joy-filled world! You promise that everything that is hurting will be made well and whole. You promise that the hungry will be filled with food and the poor will be given everything they need. Help us to be patient and trust that you are working, even when we can't see it. And help us to work so everyone can feel the joy you promise in our lifetime. Amen.**

***\*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."***

***LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH CANDLE***

***(The third purple candle is lit.) Lorrie LeGrand & Jose Otalora***

**All: O Holy One, as Christmas draws near, there is a sense of excitement in the air. We can feel a joy in our lives and see it in those around us. Still, for some of us this is a sad time because of unhappy things that have happened in our lives. Help us to have the joy that does not depend on earthly happiness but on you. Help u to be filled with your joy so we may share it with a joyless world.**

**Congregational Response — Tune: “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”**

**Lyrics by Rev. Elana Keppel Levy, 2021**

***Candles glowing, promise showing joy that fills our very soul.***

***Grace abounding, hymns resounding, Christ restores and makes us whole.***

***Mercies gleaming, wonders beaming, justice streaming, Christ redeeming –  
Christ restores and makes us whole! Christ restores and makes us whole!***

**SCRIPTURE LESSON: Luke 3:7-18**

*The Proclamation of John the Baptist*

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

**CHILDRENS MESSAGE**

**SPECIAL MUSIC**

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Unison)**

**God, we come before you humbled and distraught.**

**John, your prophet, said it clearly and plainly:**

**“Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none;  
and whoever has food must do likewise.”**

**We are awash in excessive belongings—**

**And we only part with that which no longer suits us.**

**We feel too deserving of our luxuries,**

**And only give our scraps to the poor.**

**We cannot stop. Help us, compassionate one.**

### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

**Know this well, “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”**

**God will save one and all from their oppressors,**

**even from the oppressive greed and anxiety that lives inside of them**

**and separates them from the community’s need.**

**Sing praises! God has done gloriously!**

### **SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS**

#### **PRAYER SONG: “O How Shall I Receive You?”**

**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.**

### **TIME OF QUIET MEDITATION**

#### **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**

God calls us to create a community which welcomes all:  
To care for the infirm, to heal the shame of the outcast,  
To create a welcome for all.  
Let these gifts we offer begin this process of reconciliation!

## **MUSICAL OFFERING**

### **PRAYER OF DEDICATION (*Unison*)**

Take these gifts, and gather us back together, O God,  
we who have separated ourselves  
from our neighbors  
from our higher selves  
and from your expansive Love.  
Reunite us with our calling. Amen.

**SERMON: "What Can I Do?"**

**\*CLOSING HYMN: "How Great Our Joy" (No. 182, HFG)**

1/ While by the sheep we watched at night,  
glad tidings brought an angel bright.

**Refrain:**

**How great our joy!**

**Great our joy!**

**Joy, joy, joy!**

**Joy, joy, joy!**

**Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!**

**Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!**

2/ There shall be born, so he did say,  
in Bethlehem a child today. [Refrain]

3/ There shall the child lie in a stall,  
this child who shall redeem us all. [Refrain]

4/ This gift of God we'll cherish well,  
that ever joy our hearts shall fill. [Refrain]

**\*COMMISSION (Unison)**

**Gathering one! Embracing one!**

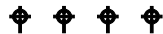
**The one-who-bears-the-image-of-those-who-bear-God's.**

**Open our hearts to find you in community,**

**In the hopeful, peaceful, joyful work of your people.**

**\*BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE**



***Welcome to Everyone!***

***Whoever or whatever brought you to our Sanctuary or our Facebook 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 before Sunday morning at 10 a.m. Call or text Pastor Candy at 925-640-9289; or send an email to [cccpastor@att.net](mailto:cccpastor@att.net)***

**POINSETTIAS FOR REMEMBRANCE**

**Poinsettias are a beautiful way to honor those whose memories bless and enrich us. To place your order, please use the signup sheet at entrance to the Sanctuary or call the Church office, and keep their memories close throughout Advent, Christmas and into 2022!**



**ZOOM BIBLE STUDY** led by Pastor Candy is offered each Monday from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. We are using the LISTEN UP! Bible study, part 2 which you may download for free. [ZOOM](#) Meeting ID: 825 4768 5992

*We are continuing to practice pandemic protocols here at CCC in worship. Face masks are required, social distancing is encouraged, doors are open for fresh air, and hand sanitizer is available at the back entrance. Your cooperation is appreciated!*

**OUR CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE** will be at 6 p.m. on Friday, December 24<sup>th</sup>. Invite your friends and family!

**THE CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING WILL BE RECEIVED NEXT SUNDAY AND ON CHRISTMAS EVE**  
The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. Gifts may be made year-round at [www.christmasfund.org](http://www.christmasfund.org). Thank you!

#### PRAYER LIST

Deena Chamberlin, The Rev. David Christensen, Carol Christensen, Joan Hansen, Anita Smith, Maggie McDowell, Don and Peggy Olson & Family, Sonya Williams, Marlene Shulman, Jen Wood, the Seara Family,  
the Bess Family, Duyen Le, Tricia and Carolyn Campbell.

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.

#### CALENDAR

DECEMBER 12, 2021 TO DECEMBER 19, 2021

<b>SUN. DEC. 12<sup>TH</sup></b>	<b>10:30 AM</b>	<b>WORSHIP (SANCTUARY &amp; FACEBOOK LIVE)</b>
<b>MON. DEC. 13<sup>TH</sup></b>	<b>6:30 PM</b>	<b>BIBLE STUDY</b>
<b>SUN. DEC. 19<sup>TH</sup></b>	<b>10:30 AM</b>	<b>WORSHIP (SANCTUARY &amp; FACEBOOK LIVE)</b>



**ONLINE GIVING** - You may click on the “Give Online Today” button at the bottom of the e-newsletter or visit CCC at [christcongregationalucc.org](http://christcongregationalucc.org) and click “online giving” to reach the secured Moon Clerk site where you will enter credit card information.

*Today's beautiful altar flowers are offered by Judy and Wally Carlson  
in gratitude for  
Christ Congregational United Church of Christ  
We Are The Church!*