

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

**14920 Southwest 67<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Palmetto Bay, Florida 33158**

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**305-235-9381**

**The Rev. Candace Thomas, Designated-Term Pastor**

**Jay Harragin, Director of Music**

**Graham Bryan, Church Musician**

**Anita Smith, Liturgist**

**December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – 10:30 a.m.**

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

***CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING***

**Preparation for Worship**

**“Light, candles, full moons magnify spirit that is in the wings. That is a neat trick, to magnify the invisible, and it raises the question: Is there another room stage left, one we cannot see? Doesn’t something happening in the wings argue a wider net of reality?”**

**Anne Lamott, [Almost Everything: Notes on Hope](#)**



## **PRELUDE**

## **WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

Leader: We praise God with all of who we are, and rejoice in our God of love who sees and loves all creation.

**People: God is mighty; holy is God's name.**

L: God is kind and strong, fair and firm.

**P: God feeds those who are hungry, gives water to the thirsty.**

L: God remembers the promises made to our ancestors, to Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Miriam, Noah, Ruth, Mary, Peter, and Paul.

**All: We praise God with all of who we are, and rejoice in our God of Love!**

**\*HYMN: "Love Came Down at Christmas" (No. 165, NCH)**

**1/ Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, Love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas;  
star and angels gave the sign.**

**2/ Worship we the Godhead,  
Love incarnate, Love divine;  
Worship we our Jesus,  
but where is God's sacred sign?**

**3/ Love shall be our token;  
love be yours and love be mine;  
Love to God and neighbor,  
love for plea and gift and sign.**

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

***May all we do in this Advent season shine forth with your love. We are your people. Love through us. Let Christ be seen in us, for we pray in Christ's name. 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 - LOVE**

***(The third purple candle is lit.)***

***Antonia, Andy, and Annasofia Godley-Juarez***

***All: O God, we thank you that Jesus showed your love for every person—babies and children, old people and young, sick people and those who were strong, rich people and those who were poor. Come to us in this Advent season, and give us love in our hearts for all people. Amen***

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

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

***Candles glowing, promise showing love that makes the world anew.  
Shines in glory, tells the story – Christ’s own love will see us through.  
With the outcast and unwelcome, Christ is steadfast, brings us all home.  
Christ’s own love will see us through! Christ’s own love will see us  
through!***

**SCRIPTURE LESSON: Micah 5:2-5a (NSRV)**

***The Ruler from Bethlehem***

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to rule in Israel,  
whose origin is from of old,  
from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time  
when she who is in labor has brought forth;  
then the rest of his kindred shall return  
to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,  
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great  
to the ends of the earth;  
and he shall be the one of peace.

If the Assyrians come into our land  
and tread upon our soil,  
we will raise against them seven shepherds  
and eight installed as rulers.

**SCRIPTURE LESSON: Luke 1:39-55 (NSRV)**

*Mary Visits Elizabeth*

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

*Mary's Song of Praise*

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

## **CHILDRENS MESSAGE**

**SPECIAL MUSIC** “In The Bleak Midwinter”

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

**Too often we pride ourselves on our singular importance, our individual worth. We credit ourselves with our successes and blame our shortcomings on others. O God, you love us in spite of ourselves. You made a covenant with the faithful; you have never turned away from your promise. Forgive us our selfish ways, put contrite hearts within us. Anoint us with your Holy Spirit, we pray.**

## **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

God knows our weakness and our strengths. God loves us as we are, knowing we are yet works in progress. God keeps all covenants; God keeps us. Receive the anointing love of God's grace. You are forgiven! Rejoice!

## **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**

In this joyous season, we celebrate the gift of Jesus who calls us to be in covenant with one another. We are bound together by cords of love, walking together in friendship, sharing each other's joys and burdens. We remember those who have walked with us in the life of the church – pastors, teachers, secretaries, ministers of music—vessels of God's grace. In a spirit of thanksgiving, we receive The Christmas Fund gifts and pray that they may be a far-reaching expression of love to many faithful servants of Christ.

**MUSICAL OFFERING**      “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION (Unison)**

We lift up our gifts so people who are bowed down by life’s burdens may be lifted up to new hope. We pray that all we share will strengthen our ministry to one another and to many with fearful hearts in every land.  
Amen.

**SERMON: “Love Rules!”**

**CLOSING HYMN: “My Soul Gives Glory to My God”      (No. 119, NCH)**

1/ My soul gives glory to my God. My heart pours out its praise  
God lifted up my lowliness in many marvelous ways.

2/ My God has done great things for me: yes, holy is God’s name.  
All people will declare me blessed, and blessings they shall claim.

3/ From age to age, to all who fear, such mercy love imparts  
dispensing justice far and near, dismissing selfish hearts.

4/ Love casts the mighty from their thrones, promotes the insecure,  
leaves hungry spirits satisfied, the rich seem suddenly poor.

5/ Praise God, whose loving covenant supports those in distress,  
remembering past promises with present faithfulness.

**\*COMMISSION (Unison)**

We have peeked at the light under the stable door. Do you have the courage to unwrap the gift the Christmas Christ brings? Go forth now and open the door to let joy break forth. Open the gift and give hope to one another. Open your heart and let peace and love enter in. Amen.

**\*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.***

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

***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!***

**JOYS AND CONCERNS – Please let Pastor Candy know of any joys or concerns you would like lifted up in worship before 10 a.m. on Sundays. Call or text Pastor Candy at 925-640-9289; or send an email to [cccpastor@att.net](mailto:cccpastor@att.net)**

**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

**THE CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING WILL BE RECEIVED TODAY 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. Give online at [www.christmasfund.org](http://www.christmasfund.org).

#### **GHANA “GIFTS OF HOPE”**

“Gifts of Hope” is an ‘alternative giving with thankfulness’ program. We are all blessed and are offering Gifts of Hope for Ghana, West Africa so you may bless others. COVID-19 has affected us all, many financially, especially in developing countries. We encourage you to make a donation to Gifts of Hope by sending a check made out to Christ Congregational Church, with a memo notation. Your designated gift will go to Ghana educational scholarships or Ghana medical needs.

Education is a way out of subsistence living and despair.

Recommendations for these scholarships come from the village elders and school administrators who recommend qualifying students who often are orphans.

The rural clinic we help in Ghana, West Africa serves 4 villages with a combined population of approximately six thousand people. COVID-19 has put a tremendous strain on an already tenuous situation in rural clinics in developing countries. This donation will help with masks, rubber gloves, and what we would consider as over the counter medicines.

We thank you for your continued support.

Rev. David and Carol Christensen

## 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, Carolyn Campbell, Gloria Jean Richardson and J.J. Ketzle.

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 19, 2021 TO DECEMBER 26, 2021

SUN. DEC. 19 <sup>TH</sup>	10:30 AM	WORSHIP (SANCTUARY & FACEBOOK LIVE)
MON. DEC. 20 <sup>TH</sup>	6:30 PM	BIBLE STUDY
FRI., DEC. 24 <sup>TH</sup>	6 PM	CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP
SUN. DEC. 25 <sup>TH</sup>	10:30 AM	WORSHIP (SANCTUARY & FACEBOOK LIVE)

**REMINDER TO MEMBERS! PLEASE RETURN YOUR ANNUAL PLEDGE COMMITMENT FORMS TO THE CHURCH OFFICE BY THE END OF THE YEAR. THANK YOU!**

**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.**

*The chancel bouquet which graces our altar  
brings wishes for a blessed Advent to all, from  
Lorrie and Isabella LeGrand.*