



Venice United Church of Christ

December 7, 2025

Second Sunday of Advent

Rev. Barbara Dickason, BCC

Sermon: “The Gift of Peace”

United in Christ’s love,

A just world for all

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Singing Prelude *One Candle Is Lit* Parrott/Kirkpatrick

**Come quickly, shalom, teach us how to prepare
for a gift that compels us with justice to care.
Our spirits are restless till sin and war cease.
One candle is lit for the reign of God's peace.**

Welcome and Announcements

Happy Advent, Venice United Church of Christ.

Grace and Peace to you in the name of Jesus who welcomes each and every one of us into this sacred space. I am Pastor Barb, Rev. Mel Burrows will be our liturgist and Communion Assistant today, and Lynda Westin and Charlene Frick will be lighting our Advent Candle.

Beautifying our sanctuary today, we have flowers given by Helen Markus and Mel Burrows in memory of Helen's daughter, Susanne Wiltberger. If you would like to participate in our annual Poinsettia beautification of the sanctuary there are flyers available both here and in Naar Hall. See an usher if you need one. We encourage you to participate in this annual event as a way to honor, celebrate, or remember loved ones.

For those of us who are worshipping online, whether today or some point in the future, I invite you to like us, share us, and let your presence be known in the comments so that we can keep

each other in prayer. If you would like to participate at a distance in honoring a loved one with a poinsettia, please let the office know.

For those of us here in this space of wreaths with candles and star filled nativity; for those of us here in this space filled with the warm glow compassionate friendship, if you have a prayer request or a joy to share, please make sure that you let the office know, as I want to make sure that we can lift up everyone's prayers as we worship.

For some of you, this is your first time joining us. I hope that you have been warmly greeted and have notated your presence either as you came in or with the seat back cards. We are excited to get to know you. We have a beautiful gift for you, so please make sure to stop by our welcome table to pick one up.

For in this holy, wonderful, ordinary space,
as Venice United Church of Christ,
we empower and invite everyone
to join us in this divine place
that we share on line and in person.

For when we gather, everyone is invited,
no matter who you are
or where you are on life's journey,
and no one is turned away.

There are a few coming events of which to take note.

Following Worship, everyone is invited to gather for a time of fellowship across the lane in Naar Hall

On Monday and Wednesday of this week, both of our Bible studies will be held in their regularly scheduled times and spaces. Shamrock Ringers, our youth handbell players, meet on Wednesday afternoon. Men's coffee meets on Friday.

Our Blue Blues Christmas Service will be held this Tuesday, December 9 at 6:30, featuring special guest "Detroit" Michael Hepner on the keyboard and our own Rob Dickason on saxophone. Our Blue Blues Christmas Service is especially designed for those who may not feel like celebrating, for those who are grieving, and for those who choose to be present to walk alongside those who are seeking some form of healing through the melancholy notes of the Blues.

Tickets are still available for the Venice Chorale concert on Monday, December 15th. See Barb Quinn after worship, or call the church office. So far, over 40 of us will be attending together.

Today, is the second week of our sermon series on the "Gift of Kindness", one of the four Pillars of the Big Joy Project. This morning, we will be lighting the candle and celebrating the Gift of Peace. For it is in Christ's peace that we proclaim with the Psalmist, "Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit away from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit." (Psalm 51:11-12)

Now, you may ask, where do you find God's gift of Peace in that scripture? Again this week, we will be turning to Neal D. Presa's book, *Worship, Justice and Joy*, to discover the answer. For Neal reminds us that just as Christ's life was for reconciling the world to God's self by righting the wrongs that we find in our common humanity, we who follow the Christ light commit ourselves to helping create a world of God's peace whenever we choose to view the places of brokenness both within and around us as Holy places of restoration and healing where all can flourish and all are well.

So, today, as we prepare light the Candle of Peace both within the sanctuary and within our beings, we come to worship our extravagantly generous, steadfastly loving God, who chose to be born and live among us, naming us siblings and beloved children of God.

So Come, beautifully authentic, humbly transforming, faithfully Good-news following body of Christ, and let us Worship God!

We Approach God's Presence

Meditation/Bringing in the Light of Christ

Lo, How a Rose e're Blooming

Praetorius

***Responsive Call to Worship¹**

Please rise in body or in spirit as we celebrate the life-giving, peace-sharing, community creating, Spirit-filled breath of God.

The sudden sense of a larger mystery.

A flood of unexpected tears.

Some chorus faintly heard.

A cherished memory brought to mind.

A fragment of a dream. The tail end of a story.

An awesome peace in the midst of a pressing chaos.

A holy reverence on a starlit, moon-bright night.

An unexplained act of kindness.

An unexpected letter, a surprise visit.

In many and varied ways God nudges, tugs, calls and beckons us.

We turn and discover God already waiting for us.

Our longing met by God's yearning.

Rejoice and sing!

Come then, with the Peace illumined by Christ, and let us worship God.

***Prayer of Peace**

Let us pray:

God of heart-longing and hope-filled dreams,

Your prophet Micah faithfully foretold that a new ruler would
come out from Bethlehem—today we celebrate the pregnant
stillness that comes before the whole world changed;

Make us bold enough to proclaim with faith—

the coming of your dwelling on earth as with You,
the coming of your justice,

the coming of your peace.
May we sing out the good news of your steadfast love.
Help us to build a home for Your Peace in our city,
that we may walk in your holy ways. Amen

Let us join our voices together to sing of the Advent of our Peace: *There's a Voice in the Wilderness.*

***Hymn** *There's a Voice in the Wilderness*

**There's a voice in the wilderness crying,
A call from the ways untrod;
Prepare in the desert a highway,
A highway for our God!
The valleys shall be exalted,
The lofty hills brought low:
Make straight all the crooked places
Where Emmanuel may go!**

**O Zion, who offers good tidings,
To the height of the mountains dare!
Lift your voice to the cities of Judah:
"Behold your God!" declare.
Like the flowers of the field we perish,
Our human works decay,
The power and pomp of nations
Shall pass like a dream away.**

**But the word of our God is forever,
Our Defender's will is strong;
God stands in the midst of nations,
To render right the wrong.
Then God shall be as a shepherd,
The lambs gathered to God's breast;
And pastures of peace shall greet them,
To give to the weary rest.**

There's a Voice in the Wilderness

Isa. 40:3-11; Ps. 103:15-17

J. Lewis Milligan, 1925; alt.

1 There's a voice in the wil-der-ness cry-ing, a
 2 O Zi-on, who of-fers good tid-ings, to the
 3 But the word of our God is for-ev-er, our De-

call from the ways un-trod: Pre-pare in the des-ert a
 height of the moun-tains dare! Lift your voice to the cit-ies of
 fend-er's will is strong; God stands in the midst of

high-way, a high-way for our God! The
 Ju-dah: "Be-hold your God!" de-clare. Like the
 na-tions, to ren-der right the wrong. Then

Before moving to Canada, J. Lewis Milligan was a successful British journalist and poet. This text was written in 1925 to celebrate the union of three churches into The United Church.

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Tune: ASCENSION Irr.
 H. Hugh Bancroft, 1938

val - leys shall be ex - alt - ed, the loft - y hills brought
 flowers of the field we per - ish, our hu - man works de -
 God shall be as a shep-herd, the lambs gath-ered to God's

low: make straight all the crook - ed pla - ces
 cay, the power and pomp of na - tions
 breast; and pas - tures of peace shall greet them,

where Em - man - u - el may go!
 shall pass like a dream a - way.
 to give to the wea - ry rest.

Lighting the Candle of Hope. *Christmas Gifts*² poem by Ann Weems

Please be seated.

Each Advent, we light candles as we watch and wait in anticipation of the Celebration of Christ's birth. As our second candle, the Candle of Peace is being lit, I invite you to listen to the words of Ann Weems's poem, *Christmas Gifts*.

I had a dream that the Holy Family
came down the escalators at Field's.
Angels in red raiment flew around
sprinkling us with Stardust,
singing alleluias and playing their bugles,
and all the shoppers knelt in adoration and praise.
The Wise Men, working in gift wrap,
began receiving our hearts
and wrapped them in rainbow papers
and we presented them to the Christ Child.
Then they were gone
and we returned to our shopping.
But I heard no more complaining about the long lines
and I saw no more rushing about.
We all smiled and greeted one another with
PEACE and GOODWILL.
We all remembered we had given away our hearts.
It was the best Christmas shopping I'd ever done!

Congregational Sung Response *Peace, Peace, Peace* Gotsch
Tune: Still, Still, Still, Austrian folk song

**Peace, peace, peace – the light of Christ is peace.
We walk with Him, his path our mission;
Grateful for his sure provision.
Peace, peace, peace – the gift of Christ is peace.**

² Ann Weems. *Kneeling in Bethlehem*. "Christmas Gifts."

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

Let us pray:

Dearest Lord,

Because of this moment,

when God's peace was offered to us

while the angels sang as their great light filled the heavens,

and the shepherds learned of God's gift of Immanuel

we can know the light of your peace

in our own lives - right now.

As the light of the candle of peace fills the earth,

may your peace surround us and fill us,

and may our lives overflow, a little more,

with the peace of wholeness, health, and life itself

given to us by the Christ Child. Amen

***Words of Grace**

Please rise, in body or spirit, as we hear and respond to words of God's Grace:

Even when unkind words, arguments, rigidity of pride, and war
grab our attention, seeking their justification;

The Gift of God's Peace appears.

We rush forward, hearts open wide to receive God's grace.

***Response**

Acts of Kindness — Peace

Tune: Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

God, we seek through acts of kindness

To treat everyone on earth

With respect and great compassion

As we honor Jesus' birth.

Help us understand the yearnings

And the needs of all until

We're a source of peace for others

As we seek to do your will.

We Encounter God in the Word

First Lesson

Isaiah 2:1-5 Young's Literal Translation

Please be seated as we hear our first lesson from Isaiah 2:1-5:

1-5 The thing that Isaiah son of Amoz has seen concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

And it has come to pass,
In the latter end of the days,
Established is the mount of Jehovah's house,
Above the top of the mounts,
And it has been lifted up above the heights,
And flowed unto it have all the nations.

And gone have many peoples and said,
'Come, and we go up unto the mount of Jehovah,
Unto the house of the God of Jacob,
And He doth teach us of His ways,
And we walk in His paths,
For from Zion goeth forth a law,
And a word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.

And He hath judged between the nations,
And hath given a decision to many peoples,
And they have beat their swords to plough-shares,
And their spears to pruning-hooks,
Nation doth not lift up sword unto nation,
Nor do they learn any more -- war.

O house of Jacob, come,
And we walk in the light of Jehovah.'

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Anthem

Prepare the Way

Martin

1-3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’”

1-2 I rejoiced with those who said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the Lord.”

3-5 Our feet are standing
in your gates, Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is built like a city
that is closely compacted together.
That is where the tribes go up—
the tribes of the Lord—
to praise the name of the Lord
according to the statute given to Israel.
There stand the thrones for judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.

6-9 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May those who love you be secure.
May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels.”
For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say, “Peace be within you.”
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your prosperity.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God!

Let us pray:

May the words of my mouth

And the mediations of all of our hearts

Be acceptable to you, O God,

The Peace of our Salvation. Amen

“Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit away from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.” Psalm 51:11-12

This morning, we are talking about how we receive, and how we can keep becoming, the Gift of God’s peace. In his book, *Worship, Justice and Joy*, Neal de Presa describes how we become the most fully human when “We embody the life pattern of Christ’s own life. The pattern of Christ’s own life was one marked by service to reconcile all of God’s people to himself.” Neal continues, “That’s what brought him [Christ] greatest joy.”³ In alignment with God’s purpose, Christ, Immanuel, God with us was born to live among us so that we might again be restored and reconciled with God. Can you imagine anything better? To both receive and keep becoming the Gift of God’s peace, God’s reconciliation, God’s joy?

Now, throughout the season of Advent we have paused the story time earlier in our service, but nothing says that I can’t bring the story to the sermon. So, that’s what I have done this morning.

I have a story here entitled, *The Sun and the Wind*, by...

³ Neal de Presa *Worship Justice and Joy*. Pg 132

It's a familiar story. After all, it begins with a disagreement. With an argument. Let's listen in.

...

... "the sun smiled warmly."

Now, one thing that I have noticed as Rob and I have moved about the country is that what is said openly and forth-rightly in some parts of the country is never so much as whispered at in others. So, while in some parts of the country the sun and the wind can have a healthy disagreement about who is right and who is wrong, in some parts of the country the sun is silenced, and in other parts, it is the wind that is invisible.

That also means that we have been taught how to deal with our anxieties and disagreements differently, too.

For instance, my parents were both raised in different parts of Northern Ohio. And as they were preparing to be wed, they were writing each other letters about the upcoming wedding. In her reflections on her life, my mom shared that her father's racism forbade her roommate from attending her as one of her bridesmaids. So, unable to disagree with her father, what did my parents do? They asked mom's roommate to serve as the guest book attendant instead, greeting everyone as they came through the doors. From my parents, then, I learned to see the Gift of God's Peace as intimately connected to God's justice, and practiced looking for alternative ways to communicate when doors get slammed shut.

I also became accustomed to an openness of conversation that didn't shy away from hard realities and conversations. One of the stories that I carry from my dad's early ministry involved a home visit. Now, home visits were pretty standard back in the 60s... and when I was young I joined dad on quite a few, sitting quietly on hard sedans while sucking on butterscotch candies. This one, however, was one of the after-hours calls. As the story goes, when dad arrived, the police also showed up, for the husband was blustering and drunk. According to the story, the two police officers took one look at my dad, basically said, 'whew, we're so glad you're here', and left him to sort out the tempers and conflict in that home. It was the Gift of God's Peace and reconciliation, and dad's ability to share and communicate it with that couple, that kept everyone safe that night.

So, when Rob and I moved to Maryland early in our careers, I was blindsided a bit. It was, in many respects, a relief moving from upstate New York to Maryland in that the speed of everyone's speech slowed to paces that I could more easily understand, but I soon discovered that so much of life was to be left in the realm of the unsaid.

When we allowed our kids to run in the empty fellowship hall after worship like we had at our church in upstate New York? Well, that was met by a slight frown of disapproval, but more telling was how the kids who were harmlessly playing with my own got in big trouble, and didn't show up to play the next week. Was that truly God's Gift of peace, or was it the gift of peacefulness, of a passive quiet, of restraint masquerading as the

virtue of self-control? I will admit that I struggled with that one a lot.

But we all kept going, and our kids grew up together and sometimes we studied scripture together in addition to attending worship and sometimes we agreed and sometimes we disagreed, but we kept growing in faithfulness and offering each other the Gift of God's Peace in shared activities and church adventures.

And all those acquaintances I thought I had at that church in Maryland, who, whenever I needed help outside of church would direct me elsewhere? They ended up being the friends who have stayed in touch over the long haul, even as one of them revealed the disaster and heartbreak of a marriage only after it was over with the simple words, "so, you know my husband and I are now divorced?"

We here at Venice United Church of Christ practice an open table of communion, an extravagant and generous welcome. But, this does not mean that we are granted an easy Gift of Peace. For in our welcome we invite and embrace folk from all over the country whose styles and patterns of communicating and dealing with any disagreements among us differ from one another's'.

Some of us practice a rare vulnerability that I first experienced when I moved to Nebraska — the Nebraska nice that is not just a slogan but a way of communicating and being expansively, extravagantly present to the needs of each other in community. Others of us have the expectation that personal things are just that — personal. So, whenever someone mentions the word

vulnerable, or authentic, it can be not only scary, but to be avoided at all cost. Yes, some of us communicate through the warm smiles of the sun, and others through the gusts and breezes of the wind. Whether through culture, or personality, or our own God-given gifts and acquired skills, we don't always speak the same language.

Fortunately, we have the Spirit of God to translate for us. Throughout our scriptures this morning, we hear God's desire that we might know the Gift of God's Peace among us, so that we might share it with others. And while some of us might communicate more like the sun and others of us more like the wind, the whole story of God's love and the Gift of Immanuel — God With Us, is best told when we tell it together.

And this morning, our Psalmist shows us how. We begin by praying for the peace of Jerusalem, God's holy city that sits in that liminal space of already and not yet. We then pray for the peace of our own city, so that those we love may be secure and that there shall be peace within our walls. And then our Psalmist turns their focus to the place from where God's peace is born and from where it is spread: "For the sake of my family and friends I will say, 'Peace be within you.' For the sake of the entire family of God, may it be well with you."

Talk about directly getting to the heart of the matter. The Gift of Peace begins within, when we vulnerably open our hearts to the presence of the One revealed in the birth of the Christ Child — the Birth of Immanuel, God With Us.

So what is our part in all of this? How do we keep arriving and becoming the Gift of God's Peace when our disagreements reveal differences in understanding, expectations, and sometimes, our very natures? How do we keep arriving and becoming the Gift of God's peace when the cultures that we have transplanted here from other times and places don't always share the same perspectives and values? How do we keep arriving and becoming the Gift of God's Peace?

Now, when I read the story earlier, how many of you observed that there was an obvious winner to that disagreement? But, what if there was a sequel to the story? And in that sequel, what if the challenge was to move a sailboat across the bay. How would that story go? As the sun smiled warmly, the person becomes more and more hot, stopping often to drink more and more water, until they lay down from the heat. The wind, blowing gently, cools the person's temperature until they are able to get up and move about the sailboat, setting the sails and guiding the rudder. And then, blowing steadily as the sails ride the wind, the wind guides the boat across the water.

The premise is the same — that God's love, God's Gift of Peace, is greater than force, and yet, by simply shifting our perspective, we can see how both the sun and the wind may have been acting out of a place of shared values, just communicating them differently.

So, whether we communicate more like the sun or the wind, our question this morning remains: How do we keep arriving and becoming the Gift of God's Peace?

Well, I certainly don't have an exhaustive list, but we begin by sharing our stories, by participating in shared experiences, and by offering each other gifts of kindness. We make space for both the sun and the wind.

For those of us who will be joining us in the Naar Hall for fellowship following worship during this time of Advent and preparing for new birth, we will have the opportunity following worship to practice each of these.

On each table you will find cards that I have obtained that invite us to tell our stories by thinking and speaking about gratitude and joy. For those of us who are a bit more like the wind, open and vulnerable with our emotions and authentic in our self expression, telling our stories may be an important part of our Journey of Gratitude and Kindness this Advent.

For those whose nature is more like the sun, preferring to simply smile warmly, I invite you into a shared experience. On each table, I have placed a set of Baoding balls. In many colors and sizes so as to work in each of our different hands, they are my response to the TorqueBall scam that is going around, which feeds on our desire to remain independent as long as possible by strengthening our hands and costs ten times if they even get delivered. Feel free to pick up a set, rotate them around in your hand, and feel the muscles in your hands gently exercise in ways

that many of our daily activities don't address. And then, feel free to exchange your set with someone else's, and reflect on how differences in weight and size impact your perception of their usefulness. And when you are finished, please leave them on the tables for next week.

For those of us online and those of us who would like to continue to practice Gifts of Kindness throughout the week, I invite you to create a list each morning of five acts of kindness that you can do each day, and check them off. Perhaps it is a phone card, a text message, a card. Perhaps it is a smile or an interactive prayer. Perhaps you discover a way to pay forward our Gifts of Advent in whatever way they have also been offered to you.

But whether through telling our stories, sharing experiences, or practicing acts of kindness, my hope for each of us this week is that we keep receiving and becoming the Gift of God's Peace. For the Gift of God's Peace appears when we allow God's spirit to inform and guide our path each day.

May it be so.

We Respond to God's Grace

Congregational Prayers

Joys:

Each beautiful new day, slow mornings, gorgeous sunsets, that we are able to celebrate our joys — for celebrating joy reminds us that we share the same source of our joy, the depth of human creativity and spirit, skilled medical professionals, friendship, safe travels, gathering together to study God's word, rebirth and recreation in communities that empower and hold us as we ask tough questions of God and each other, those who pitch in and help out, birthdays, anniversaries, milestones...

When we pray for our loved ones, we have a duty of care to not spread their business without explicit permission. Instead, as we pray, we hold our loved ones close to our heart and lift them up to God, trusting that the Spirit intercedes in all of our prayers, especially those too deep for words.

Intercessions:

Cyndi and Fred	Gary's brother, Mark	Rick	Sue
Rev. Keran	Jean	Lois	
Lisa	Faye	Christine	
Everyone who is grieving		Joyce	
Gay, Vicki, Pam, Jack, Clark, Pastor Attila			

Those whose bodies are currently hosting unwanted cancer cells.

We pray for those people who have lost their jobs and their means of supporting their families, and for pets who have lost their people.

Everyone impacted by the decisions of governments that choose violence and war instead of diplomacy; all essential workers and all frontline healthcare workers; everyone impacted by recent hurricanes, fires, tornadoes, and flooding;

and

The staff and participants of Word Made Flesh in Sierra Leone, Immokalee Farm Workers, black and brown fathers and their sons, everyone living through domestic violence, people of all religions who are being persecuted because of their faith, all who struggle with or are affected by mental illness and depression. We also pray for law enforcement officers, service men and women, missionaries and rescue workers doing God's work in dangerous places.

(First Sunday: sung)

Silent Prayer

Prayers of the People and our Lord's Prayer⁴

Holy One,

We settle into the hush in our hearts as we open ourselves to feel Your peace envelop us.

We imagine it as delicate as a lily's petals opening,

as a blanket pulled snug beneath our chin,

as a breeze shaking the oak's branches on a sunny morning.

And then, enveloped by Your gentleness,

We add to it the flavor of Christ's courage.

For when has anything worthwhile come without pain?

A baby cries in birth as the mother sweats and shakes.

We bring our vulnerable, authentic selves to worship

only to butt up against another's vulnerable,
authentic self,
and open ourselves not only to each others' joy
but each other's pain.

We receive, O God, your Gift
only to realize that your Gift is the Present,
and in order to receive it
we must let go of parts of ourselves
that keep us clinging to the past
and surrender the anxieties of the future.

Living your peace, O God, is no different.

It is fierce, and loud, and it requires tenacity.

Your Peace is complicated and yet simple.

Peace is a sip of water after the longest night.

Peace is the flame within that we must keep lit
for the sake of all.

Peace is the hush, and it is the clatter.

Help us to keep becoming the Gift of your Peace; help us keep
becoming your love, acted out loud.

We pray this morning for those who are grieving, for those who
are suffering, for those who are sitting in that place of waiting
and not knowing. Soothe our fears, nourish our bodies, and feed
our souls with the bread and cup of your compassion and mercy.

We praise you for your vision of a new heaven and a new earth,
in which everyone treats each other as your beloved children, as
together we sing the prayer that you have taught us:

**Our Father which 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 debts
as we forgive our debtors
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory.
Forever.
Amen.

We Share God's Love

Invitation to Generosity⁵

Peace makes us generous. God's abundance pours through us to our neighbors, just as God's love showers us with blessing. As each of us gives what we can, we know that our community is only as resilient as our most vulnerable neighbor.

(The offering plates are found by each doorway for your use. For those of us online, please follow the QR code.)

***Song of Gratitude**

Doxology

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
praise God all creatures here below,
Praise God above, ye heavenly host,
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

***Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication⁶**

Emmanuel, hear our prayer!

We bring these gifts before you to spread peace throughout our homes, our communities, and our world. On every street corner, beside rivers, lakes, oceans, at the top of your tallest mountains, and dwelling below the cliffs, your people are in need.

Take these gifts to strengthen our church and bring relief to your beloved children.

Amen

⁵ **Raised Above: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Advent Year A** was written by the Maria Mankin. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/advent-2a-december-7/>

⁶ **R Raised Above: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Advent Year A** was written by the Maria Mankin. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/advent-2a-december-7/>

Invitation to Holy Communion

All the parts of this shared meal together come from our Communal Earth. The various ingredients of this gluten-free bread were grown with patience, tenderness and love. They were then gathered and baked into a loaf to be broken and shared together.

The grapes used to prepare this cup were also grown with patience, tenderness and love. Sweet enough to need no added sugar, they were gathered by the hands of migrant workers and pressed into juice to be shared together.

We too, are from the Earth. With patience, tenderness, and love we find ourselves here collectively willing to partake of elements that are meant to spark a new type of living in the world.

By sharing the bread and cup we live into God's vision and deep desire for us — to be reconciled to God and to each other as we participate in a feast of unconditional love and grace — for all people.

Just as Jesus practiced an Open Table at which he taught and ate with anyone who sought him out and many that he himself approached because of their previous experiences of being excluded by people in positions of power, so we too seek to welcome everyone to Christ's table in this community of extravagant grace and radical hospitality.

Christ has invited everyone to join together in this holy feast.

**We gather with sisters and brothers and friends
from every time zone
around this beautiful sphere God created
and that we call earth.**

As today's sunlight inches across the land and sea, we prepare our Lord's table so that all may come, all may eat, and all might be nourished by the bread Christ has offered that gives us life.

**We gather to eat the bread and drink of the cup
that fills us with God's abundant love,
that reforms us to be a reflection
of God's original blessing, and
that reconnects us to God, God's creation,
and each other.**

Let us pray,

Just as Jesus took the bread, blessed it, and offered it to his disciples, revealing himself in the image of a stranger along the road to Emmaus, so too, O God, we ask you to bless this bread and this cup, so that your presence and extravagant love may be revealed to us along the roads we are traveling and in the faces of everyone we meet. Breathe your Spirit among us, and make us whole: a beautiful, fragile, divine image of You. Amen

As you prepare to come forward to share in God's promise, the ushers will dismiss and direct you so that everyone may safely share in God's bounty. For those of you who would like assistance in your seat, please let the ushers know so that we can share God's promise with you where you are.

Come, for the meal is ready!

*(The ministers and servers will prepare the elements;
the congregation is then invited to come
and receive the bread and the cup.
If you cannot come but wish to receive,
the servers will come to you.)*

Communion Meditation *Mary, Did You Know?* Lowry, Greene

***Hymn**

We Go to Carry the Light

Christmas Peace

Richard Blank

**Lord be born in our hearts this day,
Christ-child spirit bring peace we pray,
Make the wars of the world to cease,
Bring us Lord Christmas peace.
Christmas peace,
Christmas peace,
Bring us Lord, Christmas peace.**

**Lord the world cries for unity,
Bind our hearts in community.
From all hatred our souls release,
Bring us Lord Christmas peace.
Christmas peace,
Christmas peace,
Bring us Lord, Christmas peace.**

**Lord be born in us every day,
Keep the world in your peace always,
Christ child spirit in us increase,
Bring us Lord Christmas peace.
Christmas peace,
Christmas peace,
Bring us Lord, Christmas peace.**

Christmas Peace

Words and Music by
Richard Blank

E♭ *Gm* *E♭*

1. Lord be born in our hearts this day, Christ - child spir - it bring
 2. Lord the world cries for u - ni - ty Bind our hearts in com -
 3. Lord be born in us ev - 'ry day, Keep the world in your

F7 *B♭* *E♭* *Gm* *E♭*

peace we pray, Make the wars of the world to cease,
 mu - ni - ty. From all ha - tred our souls re - lease,
 peace al - way, Christ child spir - it in us in - crease,

A♭ *Fm7* *B♭7* *E♭* *Refrain*

Bring us Lord Christ - mas peace. Christ - mas peace,

A♭ *Fm7* *Gm* *E♭/B♭* *E♭*

Christ - mas peace, Bring us Lord, Christ - mas peace.

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***Blessing and Benediction⁷**

Beyond these walls, the world needs peace. Go out taking with you the exquisite Gift of Christ's Peace. Carry it boldly and share it to all those you meet, knowing that God is within you, strengthening the light of the world.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

*Sending Blessing	<i>Christ, Be Our Light</i>	Farrell
	Christ, be our light!	
	Shine in our hearts.	
	Shine through the darkness.	
	Christ be our light!	
	Shine in your church,	
	Gathered today.	

*Postlude	<i>Ding Dong! Merrily on High</i>	French
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**Please remain seated in silence for the Postlude as the
Light of Christ is carried into the world.
The worship has ended; our service begins.**

⁷ **Raised Above: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Advent Year A** was written by the Maria Mankin. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/advent-2a-december-7/>

Supporting Our Service Today

Liturgist: Rev. Mel Burrowes

Advent Lighting: Lynda Westin,
Charlene Frick

Ellen and Dick Schleicher

Welcome Table: Gayle Davis

Greeters: Loren Matasek and
Helen Helgren

Acolyte: Allison Rowe, Bella
Clapham

Head Usher: George Ikeda

Usher Team: Jim Forristall, Chet
Hamlin, Steve Hemping, Dick
Schleicher, Bonnie Thistle

Technology Team

Gary Woodrum, Debra Mosely,
Maria Groody, David Jack,
Linda Newton, Wally Davis,
Patty Fjetland

The **Lord's Table** was decorated
by Victoria Augustine

The **Sanctuary Flowers** are given
by Helen Markus and Mel
Burrows in memory of Helen's
daughter, Susanne Wiltberger

The **Church Sign** was changed by
Faye Newton & Lisa Sclafani

Sunday Librarian:

Nancy Brex

Fellowship Hosts:

VUCC Volunteers



Senior Minister

Rev. Barbara Dickason, BCC

Staff

Gary Leidheiser: *Custodian*

Barb Quinn: *Office Assistant*

Music Staff

Barbara Quinn: *Music Director*

Lynda Weston: *Bella Handbell
Director*

This Week at a Glance

Monday, December 8

SpiritFed at noon

Pack a lunch and join us **on ZOOM** for prayer, study and connecting with each other. It's a come-as-you-are space designed to help us confront the loneliness epidemic while growing closer to God.

Click on the link below to join.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83576594637?pwd=U2024sKmOPiy3CyMqV4OarYUtofaom.1>

Meeting ID: 835 7659 4637

Passcode: 913882

6:00 PM Bridge — P

Tuesday, December 9

9:00 AM Staff Meeting

10:00 AM Mission Committee -P

3:00 Game Group — P

4:00 PM Vision Team — Library

6:00 PM Girl Scouts

6:30 PM Blue Blues Christmas

Wednesday, December 10

9:00 AM - Noon Library Hours

10:00 AM Bible Study—CR

3:30 PM Shamrock Ringers

6:30 Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, December 11

4:00 Bell Choir Rehearsal

6:00 Daisies

Friday, December 12

8:30 AM Men's Coffee—Panera

Sunday, December 14

Third Sunday of Advent

9:00 AM Choir Rehearsal — S

9:00-9:45 AM Library Hour

10:00 AM Worship: Communion

Mission Moment: Christmas Fund

Fellowship Time Follows

11:00-11:15 AM Library Time

11:30 AM Usher Training

Coming Events

The church office is open

M-Th, 9-1.

Would you like to donate to
VUCC online?

Use this link:

<https://veniceucc.org/give>

Or...Use your Smart Phone
to scan the QR code:

and it will take you
directly to our
donations page.

It is really easy!



- 7:00 PM Wednesday, December 24,
Christmas Eve Worship Service

2026

- Sunday, January 11, Mission Fair—Naar Hall
- Tuesday, January 20, Women's Trip to Spanish Point in Osprey
- Sunday, January 25, CROP Walk
- 5:30 PM, Tuesday, January 27, Word Made Flesh Dinner, Naar Hall
- 10:00 AM-4:00 PM, Saturday, January 31, Venice Garden Club Flower Show—Naar Hall
- Friday/Saturday, February 6-7, Venice Coin Club Show—Naar Hall
- Sunday, February 8, On the Spot Mission Moment
- 8:00 AM-1:00 PM, Saturday, February 14, Women's Fellowship Rummage Sale
- Saturday, February 28, Christian Education Event TBA
- Sunday, March 8, Immokalee Sunday with Alan Penick