



Venice United Church of Christ

December 14, 2025

Third Sunday of Advent

Rev. Barbara Dickason, BCC

Sermon: “The Gift of Joy”

United in Christ’s love,

A just world for all

Third Sunday of Advent

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Singing Prelude *One Candle is Lit — Joy* Parrot/Kirkpatrick

**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.**

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, Maria Groody will be our liturgist today, and Mer (mare) Zovko and Paul Chebator will be leading the lighting our Advent Candle of Joy.

Beautifying our sanctuary today, we have flowers given by Dick and Ellen Schleicher in celebration of their 56th Wedding Anniversary and Rex and Ruth Ingerick in Celebration of their 65th Wedding Anniversary. 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. In order to have them arrive for the week of Christmas, orders are due tomorrow.

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. We will also be hosting our second Usher training today following worship. Everyone who has been or is interested in becoming an usher is invited to attend, as the ushers will be able to receive life-saving training on our... in addition to general updates and practices.

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

And then, tomorrow, we are heading to the Venice Chorale concert on Monday, December 15th. So far, 55 of us will be attending together.

And I know that many of you are looking forward to our Christmas Eve Candlelight service, which will be held at 7 pm. For those of you wishing to gather with our congregational family here on Christmas Day, bring something to share and join us for brunch. Details on these events are in the Connect, the App, and our bulletin.

Today is the third week of our special sermon series on the "Gift of Kindness", one of the four Pillars of the Big Joy Project. Today we light the third candle of Advent and celebrating the Gift of Joy. For it is in joy 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)

[We are here this morning because we have a shared appointment with God, or as Neal D. Presa would put it in his book, *Worship, Justice and Joy*, we have a holy date with God and God’s people to express our love, our thanksgiving, our worries, our anxieties, and our hope that God will bless and strengthen us for life. And whether our minds stray to an unpaid bill or a loved one’s suffering, whether we get distracted by this or that, we still show up bringing the messiness of our lives with us lest we cease being human and miss the advent of the birth of the one known as Immanuel, God with us.]

So, today, as we prepare light the Candle of Joy 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

Coventry Carol

English Melody, 1591

***Responsive Call to Worship**

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

Come and rejoice in God!

Our joy is in the Lord

who continually blesses our lives!

In the midst of troubles and stress,

God is near, offering compassion, love, mercy, and justice.

Shout for joy, for the Lord is near!

Let your praise dance and swirl in honor to God!

Hallelujah! The Lord is near!

Come then, with joy in the light of Christ, and let us worship God.

***Prayer of Joy**

Let us pray:

God of shining stars and wintry paths,

From the flurry of holiday busyness we come

actively Hoping for newness,

choosing to invest in Divine Love,

opting to fill our lives with lasting Joy.

From full calendars and hectic schedules,

We come to taste the Bread of Life,

Drink the cup of blessing,

and Sing songs of Advent Joy.

From the worry of our days we come to be set free.

Help us to build a home for Joy 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 Joy: *How Great our Joy.*

***Hymn**

How Great our Joy

Tune: Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

**While by the sheep we watched at night,
Lo, there appeared an angel bright:
How great our joy! Great our joy!
Joy, joy, joy!
Joy, joy, joy!
Glory to God who reigns on high!
Glory to God who reigns on high!**

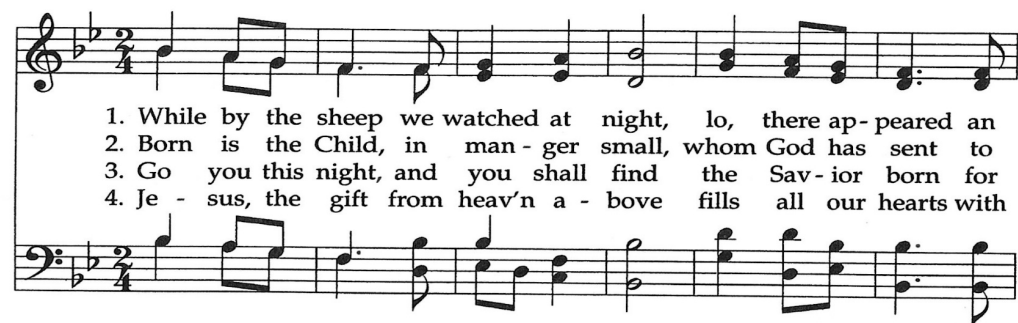
**Born is the Child, in manger small,
Whom God has sent to save us all.
How great our joy! Great our joy!
Joy, joy, joy!
Joy, joy, joy!
Glory to God who reigns on high!
Glory to God who reigns on high!**

**Go you this night, and you shall find
The Savior born for humankind.
How great our joy! Great our joy!
Joy, joy, joy!
Joy, joy, joy!
Glory to God who reigns on high!
Glory to God who reigns on high!**

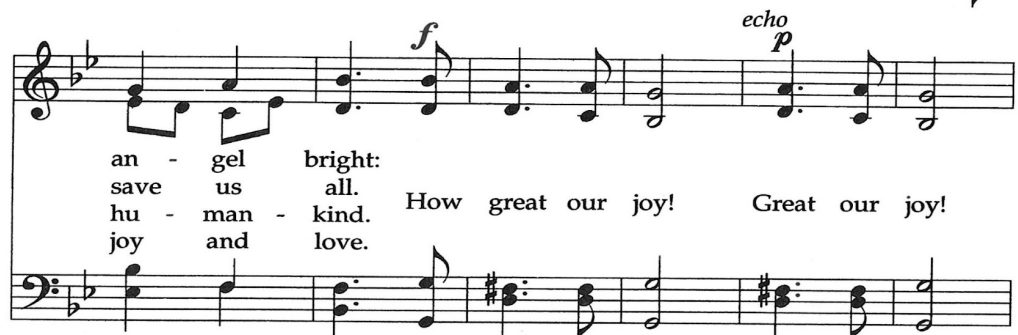
**Jesus, the gift from heav'n above
Fills all our hearts with joy and love.
How great our joy! Great our joy!
Joy, joy, joy!**

Joy, joy, joy!
Glory to God who reigns on high!
Glory to God who reigns on high!

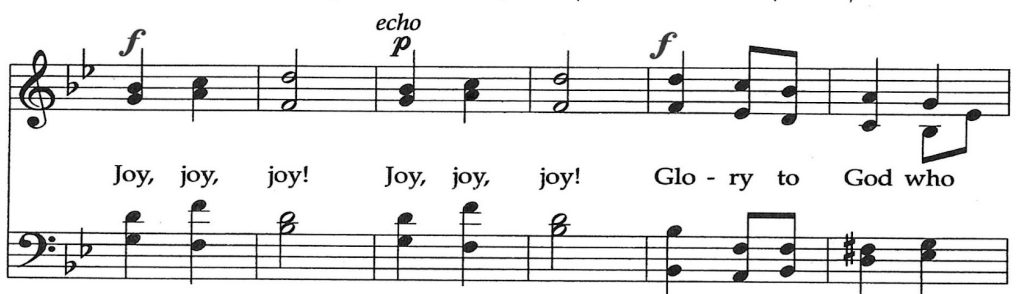
How Great Our Joy!



1. While by the sheep we watched at night, lo, there ap-peared an
 2. Born is the Child, in man-ger small, whom God has sent to
 3. Go you this night, and you shall find the Sav-ior born for
 4. Je-sus, the gift from heav'n a-bove fills all our hearts with



an-gel bright:
 save us all. How great our joy! Great our joy!
 hu-man-kind. joy and love.



Joy, joy, joy! Joy, joy, joy! Glo-ry to God who



reigns on high! Glo-ry to God who reigns on high!

WORDS: Traditional German carol, alt.
 MUSIC: Traditional German melody; arr. Hugo Jüngst, c. 1890

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JUNGST
 Irr.

Lighting the Candle of Hope *Star-giving*¹ poem by Ann Weems

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

What I'd really like to give you for Christmas
is a star....

Brilliance in a package,
something you could keep in the pocket of your jeans
or in the pocket of your being.

Something to take out in times of darkness,
something that would never snuff out or tarnish,
something you could hold in your hand,
something for wonderment,
something for pondering,
something that would remind you of
what Christmas has always meant:
God's Advent Light into the darkness of this world.

But stars are only God's for giving,
and I must be content to give you words and wishes and
packages without stars.

But I can wish you life
as radiant as the Star
that announced the Christ Child's coming,
and as filled with awe as the shepherds who stood
beneath its light.

And I can pass on to you the love
that has been given to me,
ignited countless times by others
who have knelt in Bethlehem's light.

Perhaps, if you ask, God will give you a star.

¹ Ann Weems. *Kneeling in Bethlehem*.

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

Joy, Joy, Joy – We praise you, Christ, with joy!
Our peace, our hope, our love and treasure,
Highest calling, deepest pleasure!
Joy, Joy, Joy – We praise you, Christ, with joy!

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

Let us pray:

Dearest Lord,

Even in the darkest moments,

your light helps us to glimpse your face as you walk with us.

In your promise to never leave us,

we find joy even in the midst of the world's worst suffering.

We discover cracks in the pavement

where new life springs up

sends out runners

and uproots the wickedness

of those who seek to oppress us.

May the joy we find in you surround us and fill us,

and may it overflow into the world around us. Amen

***Words of Grace**

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

In faith, no anguish can take hold completely, no sorrow outweigh the possibility of joy.

In joy, our struggles are released.

In joy, we find relief and comfort,

a connection to friends and family and God.

We Rejoice in the Gift of God's Joy.

***Response**

Acts of Kindness — Joy

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 joy for others
As we seek to do your will.**

We Encounter God in the Word

First Lesson

Isaiah 35:1-10

the Voice

Please be seated as we hear our first lesson from Isaiah 35:1-10:

1-10 Imagine the wilderness whooping for joy,
the desert's unbridled happiness with its spring flowers.

It will happen! The deserts will come alive with new growth budding
and blooming,

singing and celebrating with sheer delight.

The glory of Lebanon's cedars and the majesty of Carmel and Sharon
will spill over to the deserts.

The glory of the Eternal One will be on full display there,
and they will revel in the majestic splendor of our God.

So, with confidence and hope in this message,
strengthen those with feeble hands, shore up the weak-kneed and
weary.

Tell those who worry, the anxious and fearful,
"Take strength; have courage! There's nothing to fear.

Look, here—your God! Right here is your God!

The balance is shifting; God will right all wrongs.

None other than God will give you success.

He is coming to make you safe."

Then, such healing, such repair: the eyes of the blind will be opened;
the ears of the deaf will be clear.

The lame will leap like deer excited;
they will run and jump tirelessly and gracefully.

The stutterer, the stammerer, and the tongue of the mute
will sing out loud and clear in joyful song.

Waters will pour through the deserts;
streams will flow in godforsaken lands.

Burning sands and hardened wastelands will become pools, shimmering with life;

the thirsty ground will drink deep from refreshing springs.

Abandoned villages where predators once lurked will become grassy playgrounds.

Dry, arid land will turn lush and green.

And the road to this happy renovation will be clearly signed.

People will declare the way itself to be holy—the route, “sacred.”

Only those who are right with God

will be able to walk its pleasant path,

And nobody—no visitor, no dimwit—will get lost along it.

There’ll be no lions lying in wait, no predators or dangers in sight.

Only those made right with God will journey there.

Those whom the Eternal One has recalled from a punishing exile,

they will go along so easily. They will walk this path,

Come waltzing to Zion, singing their way

to that place of right relation to God.

An aura of joy never-ending will attend them;

they will clasp gladness and joy to their hearts,

While sadness and despair evaporate into thin air.

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

Anthem

There’ll Be Joy on that Morning

Young

2-3 John, meanwhile, had been locked up in prison. When he got wind of what Jesus was doing, he sent his own disciples to ask, “Are you the One we’ve been expecting, or are we still waiting?”

4-6 Jesus told them, “Go back and tell John what’s going on:

The blind see,
The lame walk,
Lepers are cleansed,
The deaf hear,
The dead are raised,
The wretched of the earth learn that God is on their side.

“Is this what you were expecting? Then count yourselves most blessed!”

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 Hope of our Salvation. Amen

I am going to tell you all a story this morning. Now, many of us are accustomed to saying, “Stop me if you have heard this one.” This morning, however, I am beginning this story, which many of you have heard before, with these words from the psalmist instead: “How can I keep from singing?”

Now, as many of you know, back in May of 2018, I sustained a mTBI, a mild Traumatic Brain injury. There was nothing visible about it. All that the X-ray showed was that all the vertebrae in my neck had been compacted into a stiff, straight line. Naturally, it was that heavy door’s impact with the entire top of my head that caused it, pushing my skull and brain down onto my neck and brainstem. But otherwise? Nothing was visually wrong with my brain. It just stopped working correctly. My doctors called it PCS — Post Concussion Syndrome. I was fortunate. For my doctors quickly recognized it and set me up with the therapies and a multitude of specialists needed for healing and recovery. However, as the brain is one of those areas that is difficult to medically study, I have since heard horror stories about doctors who don’t.

This is not a story about those doctors. Instead, it is a story about the time in my recovery when, due to my brain not being

able to recall any memories or make new ones, my only conversation with others were framed by the memories that they themselves would trigger in me by what they were saying... This is a story about my resting self, about what happened during that time my speech therapist had left unscheduled with timers that were supposed to remind me to do things... This is a story about what happened when all that was left to me was the present moment. This is a story about what happened when everything that I had previously thought made me, me... disappeared. This is a story about that month long period of time when all emotion and memory and time and my concept of self disappeared and all that was left was every breath in, every breath out, the marvel of hands that grasped and feet that walked even if they kept running me into doorframes because spatial awareness was also gone. This is a story about the time when I was not. This is the story about when I discovered what truly undergirds all of our pretenses of self ideation and thought and truth and facts... This is a story about when all that is stripped away, how all that remains is the Spirit of God. Breathing in, breathing out, enlivening, sustaining, the breath of God, Pneuma, Ruach, Divine, Holy, Joy. This is an advent story, a story of pondering marveling at that which God was creating and birthing within me.

Following that month, as my brain began to heal and I began a journey of reconstruction and rebirth, I was surrounded by a community who leaned in to this child-like time with the weight of their support and who, through both our Bible study and our active attention to God's mercy, justice, peace, and truth, were

able to ask me this question: What happens to this incredible gift of God's joy when the business of life starts happening again? Will it fade? Will it disappear? Or will it remain? What happens to Joy?

It is this question that led our group to the documentary *Mission:Joy*, a conversation about suffering and joy between the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu which we watched together during CoVID and which ended up reframing all of our conversations together as that group. It is this question that framed my self-reconstruction during my chaplaincy training, and informed my practice as I relearned my pastoral ministry skills in New Orleans and North Texas. It is this question that led me back to seminary and has brought me to you all. It is this question that led me to Neal de Presa's book, *Worship, Justice, and Joy: a Liturgical Pilgrimage* upon which we are basing our current Advent series.

In it, Neal talks about his own encounter with the Divine, and the Joy that he discovered in that encounter. Neal writes,

"Joy is about a vision for life, a commitment of one's being, an alignment with our life's purpose. It's a dilemma of the present tense and of that which extends beyond the present, all at the same time. It's as if the eternal realm is knocking at the fabric of the space-time continuum, and so what we experience as joy is the huggings of eternity in our present context. It is heaven showing a bit on earth.²

² pg 32.

Neal continues,

“When I had the crucible journey a few years ago that gave rise to this book, it was a journey to rediscover [my]... core identity. My pilgrimage of joy was a painful one because the Lord helped me to peel away the identities I had used to replace that core. It's not that I stopped being a pastor, a husband, a father, a son, a brother, a friend as I rediscovered my core identity. It's that I had served in those roles and in those callings separated from what it meant to be a child of God, and I needed to reintegrate my baptized identity into the whole of my life.

What informs how I am in those roles is the foundational vocation of being a child of God. Why does this matter? Because if we don't see our roles and callings through the lens of being a child of God, then when we falter, we think or we are told that we have mortally failed as a spouse/ parent/ (fill in your job)/ daughter/ son/ friend. Or, on the flip side, if we are successful in those areas, we might be tempted to think we owe our success to our own ingenuity, rather than to the Lord who has blessed us with skills and gifts.³”

Now during Advent, we have been talking about one of the four pillars that frames the BIG Joy project: we have been talking about the acts, the Gift of Kindness. And as a part of this series, this week we are talking about the Gift of Joy. Ironically, as I discovered and as Neal also writes, the Gift of Joy is about

³ pg 59.

choosing to be present, in each moment, alive and awake to the immense presence and promise of Immanuel — God with us. It is about recognizing that we only truly live into the humanity God created for us when we resonate with the Divinity that sustains and enlivens us. It is about re-ordering our lives so that instead of being expected to prioritize our lives with God first, then our spouse, if we have one, our kids and/or family, our work, our friends... we remove God from simply being a separate item on that list of our priorities, and reintegrate God into each and every one. So that God is present in our precious relationships. God is present and informing our work and volunteer positions. God is present in our hobbies. Neal suggests that we reorder our priorities in a way that reminds us every moment of every day that God is present — that the Joy of the Lord is present — in every moment. And *that* is the Gift of God's Joy.

Now, in our passages of scripture today, John the Baptist is in prison. In those days, prison was not a place where people were sent either for punishment or in hope of their reformation. Instead, it was a temporary space that led to either release, in rare cases, or more usually judgements of torture or death. Prison was simply the restricted space where you were held until judgement was rendered. And John, who had baptized Jesus and acknowledged him as the child of God at that baptism, can't help but ask again as his life compresses into the present moment: Are you the Messiah?

And Jesus responds by quoting Isaiah and the psalmists:

"The blind see,
The lame walk,
Lepers are cleansed,
The deaf hear,
The dead are raised,
The wretched of the earth learn that God is on their side."

As John faces the shortening of his humanity, Jesus demonstrates to him again the in-breaking of God's divinity all around him. And what better passage than this passage from Isaiah shows this? For in our passage from Isaiah we see God's joy —

We see the wilderness whooping for joy,
the desert's unbridled happiness with its spring flowers.
We see deserts coming alive with new growth
budding and blooming,
singing and celebrating with sheer delight.
We see the glory of the Eternal One on full display,
the majestic splendor of our God.
We see those who long for healing, healed.

And here we are, alive to the words of God's joy. And when we live into the gift of God's joy, when we live in the present offered to us rather than the past that was and the future that is not yet, when we live into the present, the Gift of God's Joy, then our hands are strengthened to serve God even as our confidence, courage, and hope emerge from the very breath of God.

For as John was reminded, Immanuel — God with us. And with God in all and through all, under and above and within and without all, how can we keep from singing? How can we keep from telling the story about the Gift of God's Joy?

So in the coming week, as we go about the busy-ness of each day, I hope that you, too, are alive and awake to the presence of Immanuel — God with us — in all that you say and do. May God With Us be an integral part of all that you value, and in offering gifts of Kindness and Joy to others, may the Joy of the Lord be revealed by your actions in ways that mirror a desert bursting into bloom.

May it be so.

We Respond to God's Grace

Congregational Prayers

Joys:

each beautiful new day, slow mornings, 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...

Intercessions:

Gary's brother, Mark	Rev. Keran
Rick	John
Christine	
Rev. Kim and Darlene, their family and friends	
Family and friends of Nicholas	Rev. Ryan's family
Karen	Fred
Cyndi	
Gay, Vicki, Pam, Jack, Clark, Pastor Attila	

Those who are grieving.

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.

(Second Sunday: Sins)

Silent Prayer

Prayers of the People and our Lord's Prayer⁴

Living God,

Who in Jesus Christ is our Joy and the fountain from whom all life flows:
we live and move and have our being in you.

We celebrate the melodious Sounds of harmony and shouts of joy! Sometimes, though, it feels hard to rejoice. When we begin to sing your praises, sometimes chasms and unhealed wounds trip us up, choking the songs we would sing.

Help us, O God, learn how to faithfully incorporate the practice of joy into our daily routine. When life is at its hardest, thank you for bringing us into the arms of a community who will support us as we remember simply to breathe each day. May your Spirit fill our lungs as we breathe out our gratitude.

Hear us this morning, our Beloved, as we choose to live into Your Joy. Hear us as we choose to show up for each other, and for our community. Hear our prayers for all who are suffering, for all who are healing, for those who choose the path of destruction, and those who choose your path of creative, redemptive, glorious love.

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 pray the prayer that you have taught us:

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.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen.**

Musical Response

Emmanuel

McGee

**Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel,
God with us, revealed in us, his name is Emmanuel.**

We Share God's Love

Mission Moment

Christmas Fund

Hilda Dillman

Invitation to Generosity⁵

“Hear these words from the Archbishop Desmond Tutu:

“God, who is forever pouring out God’s whole being from all eternity, wants you to flourish. God wants you to be filled with joy and excitement and ever longing to be able to find what is so beautiful in God’s creation: the compassion of so many, the caring, the sharing. And God says please, my child, help me. Help me to spread love and laughter and joy and compassion. And you know what, my child? As you do this — hey, presto — you discover joy. Joy, which you had not sought, comes as the gift, as almost the reward for this non-self-regarding caring for others.”

There is a simple joy to be found in sharing what we have. Regardless of how much or how little that may be, a portion belongs to God. What God desires is not an altar of sacrifices, but an outstretched hand. Give what you can, and delight in the joy your gift will bring.

(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.**

⁵ Called the Holy Way: Service Prayers for the Third Sunday of Advent Year A was written by Maria Mankin. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/advent-3a-december-14/>

***Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication**

Giver of all good things,

**as we offer these gifts to you, open our eyes to see more clearly
all that we have been given and all that we have to give.**

Stretch our capacity to build joy in this world, offering:

**our love, our companionship, and our material resources,
wherever they are needed. Amen.**

We Go to Carry the Light

***Hymn**

Jesus, Jesus, O What a Wonderful Child

**Jesus, Jesus, O what a wonderful child.
Jesus, Jesus, so holy, meek and mild;
New life, new hope the Child will bring.
Listen to the angels sing,
“Glory, glory, glory,” let the heavens ring!**

**Jesus, Jesus, O what a wonderful child.
Jesus, Jesus, so holy, meek and mild;
New life, new peace the Child will bring.
Listen to the angels sing,
“Glory, glory, glory,” let the heavens ring!**

**Jesus, Jesus, O what a wonderful child.
Jesus, Jesus, so holy, meek and mild;
New life, new joy the Child will bring.
Listen to the angels sing,
“Glory, glory, glory,” let the heavens ring!**

Jesus, Jesus, Oh, What a Wonderful Child

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African-American traditional; alt.

Luke 1:30-35; 2:8-14

Je - sus, Je - sus, oh, what a won - der - ful child.

Je - sus, Je - sus, so ho - ly, meek, and mild; new

life. new hope the Child will bring. Lis - ten to the

an - gels sing, "Glo - ry, glo - ry, glo - ry," let the heav - ens ring!

This gospel song praising the newborn Child might be effectively used by repeating it several times. It could be sung softly as a background for dance, story, or drama. Finger-snaps on the off-beats might be used to fill the rests.

Tune: WONDERFUL CHILD 11.10.8.7.11
African-American traditional
Arr. Jeffrey Radford, 1992

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***Blessing and Benediction⁶**

God, lead us from this time of prayer and reflection with dancing!
Allow the joy within each one of us to shine upon those who
suffer. Let our light be magnified by your grace each and every
day! Amen

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all
circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. And
may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, now and
forevermore. Amen

"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>Angels, from the Realms of Glory</i>	arr. Auld
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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.**

⁶ **Called the Holy Way: Service Prayers for the Third Sunday of Advent Year A** was written by Maria Mankin. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/advent-3a-december-14/>

Supporting Our Service Today

Liturgist: Maria Groody

Advent Lighting:

Mer Zovko and Paul Chebator

Welcome Table: Dave Jack

Greeters: Lynn & Rachel Weeks

Acolyte: Allison Rowe, Bella Clapham

Head Usher: Wendy Seeley

Usher Team: John Brex,

Nancy Brex, Sally Parkin,

Bonnie Thistle, Don Worthington,
Judy Worthington

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 *Dick and Ellen Schleicher* in
celebration of their 56th
anniversary and by *Rex and Ruth
Ingerick* in Celebration of their
65th anniversary.

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

Sunday Librarian:

Nancy Brex

Fellowship Hosts:

Dick & Ellen Schleicher

Rex & Ruth Ingerick



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 15

2:00 PM Women's Fellowship
Board

SpiritFed at noon

Pack a lunch and join us **on ZOOM** for prayer, study and connecting with each other. Click on the link below to join.

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/
83576594637?
pwd=U2024sKmOPiy3CyMqV4
OarYUtofaom.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83576594637?pwd=U2024sKmOPiy3CyMqV4OarYUtofaom.1)

Meeting ID: 835 7659 4637
Passcode: 913882

7:00 PM Venice Choral at Venice
Performing Arts Center for those
who have purchased tickets

Tuesday, December 16

9:00 AM Leadership Council - P
6:00 PM Audubon Society - NH
6:00 PM Girl Scouts

Wednesday, December 17

9:00 AM - Noon Library Hours
10:00 AM Bible Study—CR
11:30 AM Finance Team - P
1:00 PM Cut-ups — CR
3:30 PM Shamrock Ringers
6:30 Choir Rehearsal
7:00 PM NAMI — CR

Thursday, December 18

12:30 PM Women's Lunch — the
Point
4:00 PM Baby Basics - NH
4:00 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal
6:00 PM Daisies

Friday, December 19

8:30 AM Men's Coffee—Panera
9:00 AM Knit Wits — P
2:00 PM On the Spot — CR

Sunday, December 21

Fourth Sunday of Advent

9:00 AM Choir Rehearsal — S
9:00-9:45 AM Library Hour
10:00 AM Worship: Communion
Fellowship Time Follows
11:00-11:15 AM Library Time

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!



- Sunday, December 14, Christmas Fund Offering Begins
- 7:00 PM Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve Worship Service

2026

- Sunday, January 11, Mission Fair—Naar Hall
- Sunday, January 18 CE Labyrinth Event
- 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