



***St. John's United Church of Christ  
Chambersburg, PA  
December 14, 2025***

## **THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT – “UNEXPECTED JOY”**

\*Please stand in body or in spirit

### **GATHERING SONG**

*“This is the Day”*

### **UNISON WELCOME**

“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here”

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **CHIMING OF THE TRINITY & PRELUDE**

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

*from “The Will to Dream”*

We gather together in this place:

**prophets and dreamers, singers and poets,  
we who dare to imagine a world renewed;  
we who dare to dream God’s dream.**

We sing with Elizabeth and Mary.

**Our spirits rejoice in God, our savior!**

We bless the God of justice and joy,

**who lifts up the lowly and vulnerable.**

God’s mercy is upon us all,

**from generation to generation.**

Come and worship, all you who dream and wait.

**We have come to wonder and praise.**

### **\*HYMN #79**

*“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”*

### **LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES**

The birth of Jesus has been told and retold a thousand times in a thousand ways.

**Its impact cannot be contained in any one perspective. But who is telling the story changes how we hear it, how we imagine it, how we experience it. We light the candle of hope because hope creates a path for a new, unknown story to unfold. We light the candle of peace because peace requires us to pay attention to the needs of those around us. (Various) (All): Today, we also light the candle of joy because joy sustains us in the midst of uncertainty.**

### **CALL TO CONFESSION**

*from “The Will to Dream”*

Answering the invitation of God, who loves justice and promises us mercy, let us confess our sin.

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

*from “The Will to Dream”*

**God of joy, you created this world for joy and flourishing. We confess that we construct barriers to protect our happiness, even at the expense of others. We fill ourselves with good things, taking no heed of those who are left empty. We ignore**

oppression when it benefits our interests. We dismiss the brokenhearted when we feel inconvenienced. We crave power over liberation. Remember us in compassion and come to our aid. Tear down our dividing walls. Scatter our pride and reawaken the imagination of our hearts. Lead us again in the work of repair and restoration. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

**ASSURANCE OF GRACE**

*from "The Will to Dream"*

God clothes you in salvation and covers you with righteousness. Rejoice and take heart: in grace, you are forgiven, through the saving love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**PASSING OF THE PEACE**

*from "The Will to Dream"*

Where two or three are gathered, the prophetic Spirit is among us, inspiring our imagination and creating peace in our midst. Greet your fellow travelers now with the peace of Christ, and let these small doses of repair and reconciliation ripple out into a world in need of transformation. May the peace of Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

**SCRIPTURE READING**

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

**ANTHEM**

*"Lift Up Your Eyes"*

Joel Raney

Bell Ringers: Eric Wadel, Erin Wadel, Mitzi Wadel

**CHILDREN'S MESSAGE**

Roxanne Davenport

*Children's Corner will be offered following the Children's Message*

**SCRIPTURE READING**

Luke 1:39-55

**SERMON**

Rev. Caroline E. Saxton

**SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER (DEBTS)**

**INVITATION TO GIVING**

**OFFERTORY**

**\*OFFERTORY RESPONSE**

*from Touch Holiness: Resources for Worship*

Hope in the God who reigns above,  
who holds us all in steadfast love;  
whose spirit blows across the earth,  
preparing us for second birth. Amen.

**\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

*from "The Will to Dream"*

Holy God, we bring our gifts and offerings to you because the voices of the prophets remind us of something bigger, something greater than any system this world offers us. We believe when we trust you with our resources, the kin(g)dom of God comes much closer to reality on earth. Help us steward these gifts to create abundant life and love. Amen.

**\*HYMN #106** (insert)

*"My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise"*

**\*AFFIRMATION OF JOY**

*from "The Will to Dream" (on screen)*

**\*CHARGE & BENEDICTION**

*from "The Will to Dream"*

**POSTLUDE (seated)**

The "Nursery Nook in the Narthex" quiet area and infant/toddler space in the Parlor are available for children and families to use during worship. Age-appropriate activity bags are also available. See the deacon for assistance.

Please join us for coffee hour after worship!

**Birthdays this week:** 12/16 Judy Knepper; 12/17 Olivia Myers; 12/20 Roberta Peters; 12/21 Bernice Tosten.

<b>Worship Participants:</b>	
Pastor	Rev. Caroline E. Saxton
Organist	Barbara Motichka
Deacon in Charge	Mike Blumberg
Lector	Diana Kongkeattikul
Children's Corner	Chani Wolfe
Media Coordinators	Calvin Frantz, Neath Ham, Heidi Ramos
Bulletin cover	John (traqair57) on flickr

**The Flowers at the Foot of the Cross** are given to the Glory of God.



**St. John's Vision**

We are called to love, to learn, to worship and to witness in Christ  
as a congregation that welcomes everyone,  
and seeks service that will advance God's realm on earth.

**St. John's Mission**

To grow in love of God and neighbor

**Worship Resources:**

*"The Will to Dream" Advent liturgy © 2025 Illustrated Ministry*

*Touch Holiness: Resources for Worship, edited by Ruth C. Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi*

## O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

79

1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran-som cap-tive  
 2. O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer our spir-its by Thine  
 3. O come, Thou Wis-dom from on high, and or-der all things,  
 4. O come, De-sire of na-tions, bind all peo-ples in one

Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here, un -  
 ad - vent here; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night, and  
 far and nigh; to us the path of knowl - edge show, and  
 heart and mind; bid en - vy, strife, and quar - rels cease; fill

til the Son of God ap - pear.  
 death's dark shad - ows put to flight.  
 cause us in her ways to go. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em -  
 all the world with heav - en's peace.

man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

WORDS: Latin hymn; tr. John Mason Neale (sts. 1, 2), 1851;  
 Henry Sloane Coffin (sts. 3, 4), 1916  
 MUSIC: Plainsong; adapt. Thomas Helmore, 1854

VENI EMMANUEL  
 LM with refrain

# My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise

106

Ruth Duck, 1985

Luke 1:46-55

A D A/E E7 A

1 My heart sings out with joy - ful praise to God who rais - es me,  
 2 The arm of God is strong and just to scat - ter all the proud.  
 3 The prom - ise made in a - ges past at last has come to be,

A D A/E E7 A

Who came to me when I was low and changed my des - ti - ny.  
 The ty - rants tum - ble from their thrones and van - ish like a cloud.  
 for God has come in power to save, to set all peo - ple free.

E A D E7 A E

The Ho - ly One, the Liv - ing God, is al - ways full of grace  
 The hun - gry all are sat - is - fied; the rich are sent a - way.  
 Re - mem - bering those who wait to see sal - va - tion's dawn - ing day,

A D A/E E7 A

To those who seek their Mak - er's will in ev - ery time and place.  
 The poor of earth who suf - fer long will wel - come God's new day.  
 Our Sav - ior comes to all who weep to wipe their tears a - way.

The "Magnificat," a traditional text for evening prayer as well as Advent, is paraphrased here by Ruth Duck. She developed it to make the ancient rite of evening prayer available to her own worshipping communities.

Tune: MARIAS LOVSÅNG C.M.D.

Swedish folk melody

Alternate tunes: ELLACOMBE, TALLIS' THIRD

# Council Congregational Questionnaire

*Greetings! As we look toward the future, we want to be responsive to the needs of our congregation. A short 3-question questionnaire has been developed by the Church Council to help garner **YOUR** feedback in three areas of our ministry together: Community Engagement, Congregational Care, and Spiritual Life. Please, review the descriptions/responsibilities of each standing committee and the question they pose (this sheet is doubled sided to provide more space to respond to each question; please feel free to attach additional sheets if needed). Your ideas and feedback are incredibly valuable as we move forward and guide our future together. Please return this questionnaire to the church office (or reply to the email version) by December 30, 2025. -The Council of St. John's UCC and Pastor Caroline*

*(Current Council Members are: Harold Collier, Tom (Echo) Harrison, Diana Kongkeattikul, Jill Miller, Eileen Shaffer, Dale Myers, and Harold Wissinger)*

**(A) Community Engagement:** The Community Engagement Committee is responsible for building relationships and maintaining engagement with our community, overseeing outreach to our local and global communities, and partnering with other churches and organizations as we remain faithful to our mission to grow in love of God and neighbor.

**With many options and great needs in our community, where are the needs of our community most apparent to you? Who are the community partners, churches and/or organizations we may include in our efforts?**

Questions re: Community Engagement can be directed to Harold Collier, Peg Bryner, or Tom (Echo) Harrison

**December 2025**

## **Council Congregational Questionnaire**

**(B) Congregational Care:** The Congregational Care Committee works to nurture and promote a loving and caring culture to ensure a healthy and supportive congregation and live into our vision as a Christian church.

**What kind of support do you need from your church family?**

Questions re: Congregational Care can be directed to Eileen Shaffer, Jill Miller, or Connie Morrill-Hair

**(C) Spiritual Life:** The Spiritual Life Committee, with the help of the Worship Support Team, is responsible for worship, education, spiritual formation, and communion. The Spiritual Life Committee ensures our congregation establishes and lives a covenantal relationship with one another while nurturing a welcoming culture for visitors and members of the community.

**Beyond the classes currently being offered, what adult Christian education/faith formation opportunities would you like to see, and participate in, if offered at St. John's?**

Questions re: Spiritual Life can be directed to Dale Myers, Diana Kongkeattikul, or Lloyd Beers

**December 2025**



### **NEWS IN THE PEWS December 14, 2025**

The Rev. Caroline E. Saxton, [pastor@sjucc1811.org](mailto:pastor@sjucc1811.org) (641) 260-1868 (cell)  
Tonya Schwartz, Office Administrator, [manager@sjucc1811.org](mailto:manager@sjucc1811.org) (717) 263-8593 (office)  
Gary Crum, Music Director | Barbara Motichka, Organist  
Roxanne Davenport, Director of Children & Youth  
The Rev. Stephen W. Hoffman, Pastor Emeritus

### **THIS WEEK AT ST. JOHN'S**

**TODAY:** 7:00 pm Bell Fest – Sanctuary  
Bible Study on the Book of Acts, Chapter 24, 8 pm, Zoom (link in Friday e-blast).

#### **Monday, December 15**

10:00 am Chi Gong/Zazen silent body energy and soulful meditation – Parlor Room 104  
1:30 pm Monday Afternoon Book Study (Ch. 13) – Conference Room 111  
6:30 pm Bible & a Beer – Trojan Diner  
7:00 pm Boy Scouts – Fellowship Hall

#### **Tuesday, December 16**

5:30 pm Yoga – Room 202  
6:00 pm **NO** Ladies' Bible Study – We'll resume Jan 6  
6:30 pm Cub Scouts – Fellowship Hall/then break into smaller groups

#### **Wednesday, December 17**

6:30 pm Council Meeting – Conference Room 111  
7:00 pm Midweek Advent Services – Scotland Fellowship Church (4040 Main St. Scotland, Pa 17254)

#### **Thursday, December 18**

11:00 am NETwork Ministries Meal Prep - Kitchen  
6:00 pm Bell Choir Practice – Bell Room 117  
7:15 pm Choir Rehearsal – Choir Room 103

#### **Sunday, December 21**

8:45 am Godly Play Class – Room 119  
8:45 am SPARK! Elementary Church School Class – Room 115  
8:45 am Teen Discussion Class – Room 206  
8:45 am Wired Word Church School Class – Room 116  
10:00 am Sunday Worship – Sanctuary  
3:00 pm Blue Christmas – Sanctuary

**Sunday Night Bible Study** will meet on December 14 at 8 pm and then pause until after the holidays. We will resume with Acts chapter 25 on Sunday, January 11, 2026.

**Christmas Eve Worship** will be at 6:30 pm on Wednesday, December 24 in the Sanctuary. The musical prelude featuring the choir and Bells of St. John's will begin at 6:15 pm.

**Blue Christmas** This service aims to provide a space for quiet, contemplative worship for us to bring our sorrow, pain, or loneliness to a place where we can recognize that this holiday season can bring grief as well as joy, despair as well as hope. At Blue Christmas, we come where we can share our burdens, sadness, and fears, and gather courage to move onward and forward. The service aims to help us experience hope and healing in the midst of darkness. This year's Conococheague Mission Cooperative (CMC) Blue Christmas service will be Sunday, December 21, 3:00 pm here at St. John's UCC. Loretta McClure, CLM South Mountain Charge, will be speaking.

**Little Free Pantry** is located by parking lot B to help feed those in our neighborhood who are hungry. Donations of cash and/or nonperishable food items can be dropped off at the church office. Due to the cold temperatures, dry goods are preferable to canned goods.

**Parking Lot Progress** The trees and islands in parking lot A have been removed and the initial repaving work is complete. Please continue to use caution as the ground settles. Thank you!

**Church Directory Update** As we work to finalize our new photo directory, we need your updated contact information. If your address, phone number or email address has changed, please share this with the church office. If you have not yet submitted a photo or would like to have your picture taken, please contact the church office. Thank you!

**Reverse Advent Calendar Mission Challenge** helps us to share God's love through giving to others as we prepare to receive the gift of Jesus. Wrapped boxes with a calendar of desired items are available in both lobbies. These gifts of food will be dedicated on Christmas Eve.

**Silent Night, Holy Night** Sign up on the youth bulletin or see Roxanne if you would like to help dramatize the Christmas story during the Christmas Eve service at 6:30 pm.

**December First Fruits** will go to support Salvation Army and continuing their work of helping those in our community who are struggling. Thank you for your generosity in supporting the Angel Tree and the many other ways they serve children and families in Chambersburg.

**United Way Winter Warmth Drive** is currently underway. Among the requested items to donate are healthy food and winter gear. A full listing of desired items can be found in the December Spirit. St. John's is a collection site; donation boxes are in both lobbies. Thank you for your support of these efforts to care for our neighbors, feeding the hungry and clothing the cold.

**November/December Upper Room** devotionals are currently available at the Welcome Center. We suggest a donation of \$1 for small print/\$2 for large print copies. If you would like to have a copy mailed to you, please contact the church office.

**Bible and a Beer** is an opportunity to talk about our faith in public. Join us on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month at the Trojan Diner at 6:30 pm. Our next gathering will be December 15.

**Monday Afternoon Book Study** will finish "A People's History of Christianity" on 12/15. We will start our next book ("Love's Braided Dance" by Norman Wirzba) on January 12, 2026.