



God Incarnate Taking Place

Third Sunday of Advent

This profound expression of God's redemptive purposes found in stanza three of our featured Advent hymn, *Of the Father's Love Begotten*, capsulizes the miracle of the Word becoming Flesh. Said in a slightly different way, *The Divine Word Became Jesus*. This is no minor thing. It was an earth-shattering revelation because Love, in its fullest expression and intensity, was coming to live with us forever. That love lives today, despite attempts to dismiss or undermine it.

On this third of Advent, we hear the proclamation of John the Baptist as he echoes the prophet Isaiah. Preparing for Jesus entails, among other things, taking a look at whatever road in life we find ourselves on, and doing some "road work." Whatever obstructs our travel to fully embrace the coming of Jesus needs attention!

December 17, 2023
10:15 am

Order of Worship

St. John's United Church of Christ

500 W. Main Street, Lansdale, PA 19446

10:15 am—December 17, 2023— Third Sunday of Advent

You are invited to stand when indicated by an asterisk and speak the words in bold if able.

PRELUDE: An Advent Prelude.....Charles Callahan
Including *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* and *Creator of the Stars at Night*

WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

*CALL TO WORSHIP

In the height of our Advent journey, we gather to worship and to consider the gift of joy.

We are choosing to center our lives around the light of joy. We light this candle today to symbolize the joy that comes when we recognize and rely upon God as our strength, our hope, and our source of all love.

We anticipate the day when joy is born among us, and even amid the cheer of this season, we long for a joy that stays and lasts and abides with us.

Grant us the courage and mindfulness to seek and experience that which is deeper and fuller than happiness ~ true joy. May our worship today inspire joy in the face of whatever lies ahead.

Come let us worship in the light of joy!

Amen.

*CONFESSION

Gracious God, we come to you this day in need of the gift that we celebrate on this 3rd Sunday of Advent~ the gift of JOY. As we scurry around making last minute preparations for Christmas, the temptation to give into the stress, anxiety, and hurriedness of this season is strong. In the midst of this, we think of Mary, who could have very easily given into worry and fear, but instead, held fast to joy and bore your son Jesus into a chaotic and broken world. We think of John the Baptist, who shifts our focus from frantic purchasing of gifts for the coming of Christmas to thoughtful preparation of our hearts for the coming of Christ. Forgive us for seeking happiness in shallow places and help us to embrace the deep, abiding joy that can only come from a certain knowledge of your love for us and your hope for the world. Amen.

*ASSURANCE

The source of our joy is God's abundant grace. When we confess our sins, when we ask for God's help to see things not as we see them, but as God sees them, we are met with understanding, mercy, and love. We are forgiven, loved, and set free from the need to always be happy so that we might experience the joy of life in and through Christ. **Amen.**

***PROCESSIONAL HYMN/ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING: Of the Father's Love Begotten**

The choir sings stanzas 1 and 2. All sing stanzas 3, 4, and 5.

The *Candle of Joy* is lit on the Advent Wreath while the hymn is sung.



1. Of the Fa - ther's love be - got - ten, Ere the worlds be - gan to be,
 2. This is he whom seers in old time, Chant-ed of with one ac - cord,
 3. Bless - ed dawn - ing of sal - va - tion, As the Word is shown in grace,
 4. Let the heights of heav'n a - dore him; An - gel hosts, his prais - es sing;
 5. Christ, to thee, with God the Fa - ther, And, O Ho - ly Ghost, to thee,



He is Al - pha and O - me - ga, He the source, the end - ing he,
 Whom the voic - es of the proph-ets, Prom-ised in their faith - ful word;
 In - to earth - ly flesh re - ceiv - ing: God in - car - nate tak - ing place.
 Pow'rs, do - min - ions, bow be - fore him, And ex - tol our God and King;
 Hymn and chant and high thanks-gi - ving, And un - wear - ied prai - ses be:



Of the things that are, that have - been,
 Now he shines, the long - ex - pect - ed;
 Now the light of God re - veal - ed,
 Let no tongue on earth be si - lent,
 Hon - or, glo - ry, and do - min - ion,



And that fu - ture years shall see, Ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 Let cre - a - tion praise its Lord, Ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 through the Child of hu - man face, Ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 Ev - 'ry voice in con - cert ring, Ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 And e - ter - nal vic - tor - y, Ev - er - more and ev - er - more!

SCRIPTURE: Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord;
 make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled,
 and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
 and the crooked shall be made straight,
 and the rough ways made smooth,
 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' ”

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

LORD’S PRAYER

**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 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.

ANTHEM: Comfort, Comfort.....Arr. John Ferguson

“Comfort, comfort now my people; Tell of peace!” So says our God.

Comfort those who sit in darkness mourning under sorrow’s load.

To God’s people now proclaim that God’s pardon waits for them!

Tell them that their war is over; God will reign in peace forever!

For the herald’s voice is crying in the desert far and near,

calling us to true repentance, since the Kingdom now is here.

Oh, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way!

Let the valleys rise to meet him, and the hills bow down to greet him!

Straight shall be what long was crooked, and the rougher places plain!

Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits his holy reign!

For the glory of the Lord now on earth is shed abroad,

and all flesh shall see the token that God’s word is never broken.

-Johann G. Olearius, tr. Catherine Winkworth

SERMON: “Preparing the Way”Rev. Addie Stong

HYMN: All Earth Is Waiting.....121

JOYS/CONCERNS/PRAYERS/SUNG RESPONSE: My Soul Gives Glory to My God, Stanza 5

Praise God, whose lov - ing cov - e - nant sup - ports those in dis - tress,

re - mem - ber - ing past prom - is - es with pres - ent faith - ful - ness.

*INVITATION TO OFFERING/SUNG RESPONSE: We Hail You God's Anointed, Stanza 3

The wise shall bow be - fore you and gold and in - cense bring;
all na - tions shall a - dore you, and praise all peo - ples sing;
To you shall prayer un - ceas - ing and dai - ly vows be said,
your realm is still in - creas - ing, with you, O Christ, as head.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

*CLOSING HYMN: Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates.....117
Stanza 2 may be sung in harmony.

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE: Hear, King of Angels (from *Christmas Oratorio*).....J.S. Bach

Following worship, you are invited to join us for fellowship in Assembly Hall.

Worship Leaders

Rev. Addie Stong: Preacher

Rev. Dale Davis: Liturgist

Andrew Paulson: Organist, Chancel Choir Director

Dave DiValentino: Trumpet

Grace Bruen, David Furniss, Cindy Reese, Jon Sands: *Comfort, Comfort* Instrumentalists
Chancel Choir

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Of the Father's Love Begotten
Text: Aurelius P. Clemens, 348-ca.413
Music: DIVINUM MYSTERIUM,
Plainsong, Mode V, 13th century;
Setting by Michael Burkhardt,
© 1993, Morningstar Music

My Soul Gives Glory to My God
Text: Miriam Therese Winter, 1987
© 1978, 1987 Medical Mission Sisters
Music: MORNING SONG,
Kentucky Harmony, 1816

We Hail You God's Anointed
Text: James Montgomery, 1821
Music: ELLACOMBE, Gesangbuch der
herzoglichen Wirtembergischen
katholischen Hofkapelle, 1784

December 17, 2023

- The Nursery will be open for you to use mindfully, if your little one needs a break. No volunteers will be on duty, so a parent, grandparent, or responsible adult must stay with their child.
- Today's worship available later online on St. John's Facebook Page, Website or YouTube Channel: youtube.com/stjohnsuccclansdalepa
- Please ask a Hospitality Team member for an audio device if you are having difficulty hearing the service.
- CD's of this morning's service are available by contacting the church office.
- Reminder: The wheelchairs and first aid kit are stored in the "First Aid Closet" in the narthex (the door is clearly labeled). The automatic external defibrillator (AED) is located in the church Library on the wall closest to the Sanctuary.

Worship Assistants

Hospitality: Grace and Mark Bruen, Team leaders; Mary Billy, Anne Haines, Gerry Linderman, Rickie Lee Sands, Ginny Wilkinson

Elder of the Morning: Chriss Bodde

CD Technician: Matt Rivett

Chancel Flower Ministry: Tracey & Mark O'Neill

Driver: Jo-Ann Sine

Umbrella Ministry: Joyce Huisenga

Weekly amount needed for Current Income 2023	\$7,788.46
Weekly amount needed for OCWM 2023	\$865.00
A Look at the Week of December 3, 2023 - Love Gift Sunday	
Attendance: 10:15 am, December 3	161
Attendance: 5:30 pm, December 6	25
Offering For Current Income	\$9,575.68
Offering For Our Church's Wider Mission	\$2,107.00
A Look at the Week of December 10, 2023	
Attendance: 10:15 am, December 10	157
Attendance: 4:00 pm, December 10 - Artist Series	372 est.
Attendance: 5:30 pm, December 13	29
Offering For Current Income	\$10,280.00
Offering For Our Church's Wider Mission	\$907.00

To give online through our secure platform, visit
<https://app.easytithes.com/app/giving/stjohnsucc>

Scan here for online giving




St. John's United Church of Christ

500 West Main Street, Lansdale, PA 19446 Office: 215.855.5489 email: office@st-johns-ucc.org

If you would like more information about St. John's please speak with one of the staff
or visit our website at <http://www.st-johns-ucc.org>

Rev. Dale Davis, M. Div., Interim Senior Pastor Rev. Adelaide L. Stong, M. Div., Associate Pastor
Andrew Paulson, M.M., M.A., Minister of Music Abbie Lampe, Minister of Music for Children & Youth
Lisa Delp, Church Admin. Leroy Horst, Buildings & Grounds Supervisor Bill Bergey, Custodian
Liz Rivett, Council President

Announcements

2023 Poinsettia Donation Form 	
Due Date 12/18/23	
In Memory of _____	
In Honor of _____	
Name _____ Amount \$ _____ Envelope # _____	

Important Notice

All donations designated for 2023 must be received in the church office by Monday, December 25. Donations received after that date will be credited to your 2024 donation account. Your contributions may be delivered in-person on Christmas Eve, mailed to the church, or placed in the drop box located at the entrance by the church ramp.

This Week at St. John's

If you would like more information, please contact the church office 215.855.5489 or office@st-johns-ucc.org

Dec	17	Sun	<div>9:00 am</div> <div>10:15 am</div>	Third Sunday of Advent Connect ³ , Activity Room Morning Worship, Sanctuary Fellowship
Dec	12	Tue	7:00 pm	AA
Dec	20	Wed	<div>5:00-7:00 pm</div> <div>6:00 pm</div> <div>7:00 pm</div> <div>After worship</div>	Community Meal, Assembly Hall NO Children's Music, NO Adult Education Service of Longest Night, Communion in the Sanctuary Chancel Choir
Dec	21	Thu	9:30 am	Enlightener Folding
Dec	24	Sun	<div>9:00 am</div> <div>10:15 am</div> <div>10:15 pm</div>	Fourth Sunday of Advent/Christmas Eve Connect ³ , Activity Room Morning Worship, Communion Prelude begins at 10am Music from the Children's Choir, Piano, and Organ Fellowship Evening Worship, Communion @ 10:15pm Prelude begins @ 10pm Music from the Chancel Choir, United Ringers, String Quartet, Piano, and Organ Candle lighting
Dec	25	Mon		Christmas Day - Office Closed
Dec	26	Tue	7:00 pm	AA
Dec	27	Wed		NO Wednesday Night Live
Dec	31	Sun	<div>9:00 am</div> <div>10:15 am</div>	First Sunday after Christmas NO Connect ³ , Activity Room Morning Worship, Sanctuary Fellowship

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2023 AT ST. JOHN'S ~ GOD INCARNATE TAKING PLACE

The birth of Christ is a reminder that God comes to us in subtle, intimate, and surprising ways.

Join us as we follow the story of *God Incarnate Taking Place*.



Wednesday, December 20

No 5:30pm Wednesday Evening Advent Worship (Dinner will still be served from 5pm-7pm)

7pm – Service of Longest Night

Join us for an evening worship service on this very tender night of the year.

The Chancel Choir leads us in an evening filled with reflection and love.

Sunday, December 24: Christmas Eve

10:15am – Sunday Morning Worship with Holy Communion

Music from the Children's Choir, Piano, and Organ.

Join us as we sing familiar carols and hear the Christmas story read from the Gospel according to Luke.

A special Christmas Eve prelude begins at 10am.

10:15pm – Sunday Evening Worship with Holy Communion

Music from the Chancel Choir, United Ringers (Handbell Choir), String Quartet, Piano, and Organ.

Join us as we sing familiar carols, hear the Christmas story read from the Gospel according to Luke, and light candles to welcome the birth of Christ. A special Christmas Eve prelude begins at 10pm.

Wednesday, December 27

No Wednesday Evening Programming

Sunday, December 31: New Year's Eve

10:15am – Sunday Morning Worship

Join us as we end 2023 and welcome 2024 with a special New Year's Eve worship service.

Service of Longest Night

Wednesday evening December 20, 7:00 p.m.

Each year as the holidays arrive also come a range of emotions. All around us we can sense excitement, anticipation, and joy. But we can also experience stress, loneliness, feelings of being overwhelmed, sadness, or the feeling of being disconnected or lost.

The Service of Longest Night is an opportunity for anyone and everyone feeling out of sorts for any reason and who need some time to center, to reflect, to connect with companions of faith, and to be reminded that we are being held by a light that is stronger than darkness, whose love embraces us just as we are.

We hope you will join us in the sanctuary for this meaningful time of prayer, reflection, and music led by the Chancel Choir. Be sure to join us for a meal from 5pm-7pm in Assembly Hall before the service. *There will be no 5:30pm worship in the Fireside Room.*

