THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHESTER

An Open & Affirming Congregation of
The United Church of Christ
December 3, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
First Sunday of Advent

WELCOME		Jennifer Gill, Deacon
PRELUDE	*Savior of the Nations, Come*	J. Walter, arr. W. Kerr
INTROIT	*Carol of the Winter Wind*	R. Lowry and J. Martin
LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH		insert

Leader: Today is the first Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Hope.

People: Our hope is in God, and in the son Jesus Christ, who is the one appointed by God to be judge of all things, and through whom God has promised to save and redeem all people.

Leader: We light this candle today to remind us that Christ is our hope and the hope of the world. We thank God for the promises made to us and for the light that is brought into the world.

(Light the First Candle)

All: O God of Hope, Emmanuel, God with Us – we pray you to send your light into our hearts. Help us to be ready for the day and the hour of Christ's coming. Live in us and help us to live in you. By the power of the Holy Spirit, transform us so that our worship, our celebration, our time of preparation, may be pleasing to you

both now and forevermore. Amen.

(Sing verse 1, *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence,* # 119)

*HYMN *Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates* 127

Lift up your heads, O mighty gates; behold the King of Glory waits! The Prince of Peace is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.

Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart from earthly use for heaven's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart to you; here, Lord, abide! Let me your inner presence feel; your grace and love in me reveal.

So come, my Sovereign; enter in! Let new and nobler life begin; your Holy Spirit guide us on, until the glorious crown be won.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We confess, O God, that we do not always take seriously what it means for you to come into our lives. There are times we do not live as though salvation is near; we fail to love our neighbors, and in doing so we fail to love ourselves. Too seldom do we turn our swords and spears into plowshares and pruning hooks. Forgive us, we pray. May this season of Advent be a time of returning to you, that we may again walk in the light and life of Christ. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Isaiah 40.3-8

A voice cries out:
'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, /make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up, /and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level, / and the rough places a plain.
Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, /and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'
A voice says, 'Cry out!' / And I said, 'What shall I cry?'
All people are grass, / their constancy is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades, / when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass. / The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand for ever.

ANTHEM *When Will He Come* B. Williams

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON Mark 13.24-37

SERMON *"It's The End of the World As We Know It"* Rev. W. Alan Froggatt

"Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and amazing: seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended."
(Revelation 15.1)

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

OFFERTORY *Bethlehem Wind* J. Martin

*DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow / Praise God all creatures here below
Praise God for all that love has done / Creator, Christ and Spirit, One. Amen

JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER *("trespasses")*

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

INVITATION

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

SHARING THE BREAD AND CUP

POEM *I Am a Prayer* Joy Harjo, 2023

*HYMN *As We Gather at Your Table* 314

As we gather at your table, as we listen to your word, help us know, O God, your presence; let our hearts and minds be stirred. Nourish us with sacred story till we claim it as our own; teach us through this holy banquet how to make Love's victory known.

Turn our worship into witness in the sacrament of life; send us forth to love and serve you, bringing peace where there is strife. Give us, Christ, your great compassion to forgive as you forgave; may we still behold your image in the world you died to save.

Gracious Spirit, help us summon other guests to share that feast where triumphant Love will welcome those who had been last and least. There no more will envy blind us nor will pride our peace destroy, as we join with saints and angels to repeat the sounding joy.

*BENEDICTION

BENEDICTION RESPONSE *Carol of the Winter Wind* R. Lowry and J. Martin

LOOKING AHEAD

December 3	5:00 pm	Soup Kitchen	December 7	10:00 am 5:30 pm **7:00 pm**	Backpack Program Scouts – Bear Den **Choir Rehearsal**
December 4	6:30 pm	Irish Dance	December 8	**8:15 am**	**Coffice Hours** **The Villager**
December 5	8:30 am 6:30 pm	Yoga Scouts – AoL	December 10	**10:00 am** 5:00 pm	**Worship** Soup Kitchen

NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome! No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here at the United Church of Chester, an Open and Affirming Church and a member of the United Church of Christ. **The United Church of Chester is centered in Christ's love, embracing, nurturing, serving all, and committed to justice and peace**.

The Deacon for the month of December is **Jennifer Gill.** Our Greeters for today are **Barbara-Jan Wilson** and **Sarah Murcko.** Flowers on the altar were provided by **Barbara-Jan Wilson** and **Sarah Murcko** with love to mothers, December births and babies – especially to their Sarah and the twins!

Advent Wreath Lighting - Volunteers Needed

We need one more family to participate in the annual Advent Wreath lighting ceremony this season. The readings will be provided for you in advance. Please contact Alan or the church office if you are interested.

The Remembrance Tree is in the narthex. Please add the name of a loved one to the tree that we will include in prayer in early January.

Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee is supporting several groups this holiday season. Below are the various ways that you can have an opportunity to help someone in need this year:

Holiday Gift Tags

Working with the local Chester social worker, families have requested specific gift items this year. The gift tags are located in the narthex. Select a tag(s) – please tell Sue Germini-Humble which tag(s) you are taking and return the item unwrapped by Sunday, December 17th.

Covenant to Care

Collecting Amazon and Walmart gift cards in any amount for the Covenant to Care/Middletown DCF in Middletown. Please return any gift cards to by Sunday, December 17th.

Stuff-A-Cruiser

Collecting new, unwrapped toys for any children from now until December 16th.

Clothing Drive

Collecting new clothing for any children of any age. Specifically, we are looking for hats, mittens or gloves, sweats (tops & bottoms), pajamas and socks. These will be distributed to those in need. Please return any items by Sunday, December 17th.

Offering envelopes for 2024 are available in the Narthex. We have ordered fewer boxes this year, so your number may have changed. If you do not find your name on a box, please see Diane Lindsay, Financial Secretary.

ALAN'S OFFICE HOURS: Wednesday – Friday 8:30 am-12:30 pm.

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday - Friday 9am-1pm.