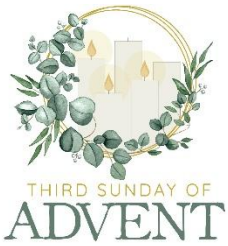

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THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHESTER

An Open & Affirming Congregation of
The United Church of Christ
December 14, 2025 10:00 a.m.
Third Sunday of Advent

PREPARATION FOR THE WORD

WELCOME — Cheryl Archer, Deacon

PRELUDE — *A medley of O Come Little Children*
C. Von Schmidt/ We Wish You a Merry Christmas (trad. English folksong)

INTROIT — *In the Lord I'll be Ever Thankful* (Taize chant)

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH — Barbara C. Smith

Isaiah 49.13: Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains into singing! For the Lord has comforted the people, and will have compassion on all who suffer.

Joy / is found in the moment / when the tables turn / and the veil of denial is lifted / displaying vulnerability and fear / colliding with hope and promise / mingling today / a tingle / growing warm / lurching forward / is joy / we light a candle for joy.

[The candles are lit. (2 Purple, 1 Pink)]

Dear God, In the height of our Advent walk, grant us the courage to experience joy. Joy in the face of apathy, joy in the face of sorrow, joy in the face of uncertainty. Amen.

*HYMN *This Little Light of Mine* 364

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine; Oh This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, Oh This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

This great joy I have, I'm gonna let it shine; Oh This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, Oh This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Ev'ry where I go I'm gonna let it shine; Oh This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, Oh This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

All through the nigh I'm gonna let it shine; Oh This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, Oh This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine; Oh This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, Oh This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy God, our very waiting in Advent is itself a confession: If we are waiting for Emmanuel, we are not yet with you; if we are waiting for Jesus, we still need a Savior; if we are waiting for a Messiah, the proud are still powerful, the mighty are exalted, the hungry stand unheard at the door; if we are waiting for your incarnation in human form, we have not known you in our sister, we have not loved you in our brother, we have not served you in our neighbor. In this time of great meaning, in the stillness of Advent joy, hear our deepest confession; heal us and make us new through the good tidings of your presence in our lives. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON DANIEL 8.15-18, 9.20-23A

When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I tried to understand it. Then someone appeared standing before me, having the appearance of a man, and I heard a human voice by the Ulai, calling, "Gabriel, help this man understand the vision." So he came near where I stood; and

when he came, I became frightened and fell prostrate. But he said to me, "Understand, O mortal, that the vision is for the time of the end." As he was speaking to me, I fell into a trance, face to the ground; then he touched me and set me on my feet. While I was speaking, and was praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God on behalf of the holy mountain of my God— while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen before in a vision, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. He came and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come out to give you wisdom and understanding. At the beginning of your supplications a word went out, and I have come to declare it, for you are greatly beloved.

ANTHEM *Patapan, Noel* P. Liebergen

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON LUKE 1.26-38

HYMN *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* 114

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.

Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Refrain

O come, thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh; to us the path of knowledge show, and cause us in her ways to go.

Refrain

O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind; bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

Refrain

SERMON *"Annunciation Moments"* Rev. W. Alan Froggatt

"The angel said to him, Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard…
The angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."
(Luke 1.13 & 30)

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

OFFERTORY *Good King Wenceslas* trad. Carol

*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 & LORD'S PRAYER *("trespasses")*

POEM *Gabriel* Adrienne Rich (1929-2012)

*HYMN *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came* 123

The angel Gabriel from heaven came, with wings as drifted snow, with eyes as flame;
"All hail to thee, O lowly maiden Mary," Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

"For know a blessed mother thou shalt be, all generations praise and honor thee, thy son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold." Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head; "To me be as it pleaseth God," she said.
"My soul shall laud and magnify God's holy name." Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born in Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn, and Christian folk throughout the world will ever say: Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

*BLESSING & BENEDICTION

BENEDICTION RESPONSE *God Be With You Till We Meet Again* Rankin

(*all who are able may stand)

LOOKING AHEAD

December 14	**10:00 am** 5:00 pm	**Worship** Soup Kitchen	December 18	8:30 am 6:30 pm	Yoga Scout Pack Mtg.
December 15	4:30 pm	Irish Dance Group	December 19	**8:15 am**	**Coffice Hours at Simon's Marketplace**
December 16	8:30 am	Yoga	December 21	**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 **Cheryl Archer**. The flowers in the chancel were provided by **Barbara Smith** in celebration of all those with birthdays in December. The greeter this morning is **Barbara Smith**. Coffee hour is being hosted by **Diane Lindsay**. Thank you all!

Christmas Fair – Thank you
Many thanks to all who helped with the set-up, making, baking, sorting, pricing and clean-up, etc. for this year's Christmas Fair. Special thanks to our co-chairs Judy Schondorf and Brenda Johnson!

Holiday Sunday School – Today
Families with young children (ages 2-5) are invited to a Sunday school holiday kickoff today from 10-11 am. After a welcome from Pastor Alan and a festive song with Karli and the choir, we will go to fellowship hall for yoga with Megan, music with Margie and Christmas crafts. Join us! Bring friends!

Poinsettia Orders – Due Thursday, December 18th
Order forms for poinsettias are in the bulletin. Please complete order forms and return to the office by **Thursday, December 18th** so that your dedications can be included in the bulletin on 12/21.

Christmas Cantata – December 21
This year's cantata is *"The Voices of Christmas"* by Joseph Martin. Please join us at 10:00 am next Sunday for this wonderful gift of music from our choir!

ALAN'S OFFICE HOURS:. Wednesday – Friday 8:30 am – 12:30 pm, or by appointment.

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday – Friday 9:00 am – 1:00 pm