

December 13, 2020  
Third Week of Advent  
St. James United Church of Christ  
St. Mark's United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Patrick Schultz  
Pastor

Randy Sohn  
Organist

Prelude Music  
Gathering in Readiness for Worship  
Ringing of the Bells

*Eternal Father, Strong to Save*

**Call to Worship (Responsively)**

L: Love has come down to us this Advent Season.

**P: Divine love which heals and transforms our lives.**

L: With great joy, we receive that love and share it with others.

**P: We open our hearts to all God's children, the last, the least, and the lost, as well as those who feel privileged.**

L: The Lord has done and continues to do great things for us.

**P: Praise be to God who loves us so much and who challenges us to be people of joy in this darkened world. Amen.**

**Opening Prayer**

Lord God, as we gather this day, we open our hearts to you, seeking your healing and transforming love. Our world cries for justice for all people; we cannot be the people you call us to be without the peace-bringers and those who would heal and teach the ways of peace. Be with all of us. Prepare us for this bright light of love which you are sending to us, for we ask this in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

**Reading and Lighting of the Advent Candles**

Emma Russart and the Russart family

**Praising God in Music**

*Blessed Be The God of Israel*

**Scripture Reading**

*Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11  
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24  
John 1:6-8, 19-28*

**Message:**

*Joy is the Infallible Sign of God's Presence*  
Rev. Dr. Patrick Schultz

**A Time of Prayer and Silent Reflection**

**Prayer of Confession**

Patient and forgiving God, you know how we want to be people of peace and justice, but when opportunities come to participate in groups working for justice, we turn our backs and walk the other way, or we give a token pledge and then ignore further pleas for assistance. We hide our names from appearing on roles of supporters of justice-seeking organizations. Forgive us, O God, when we give only lip service to ministries of justice rather than pledging our lives to helping all people in need. Free us from our selfishness. Banish our fears and move us in ways of peace and justice, bringing your love and hope to all God's children. We ask these things in God's name.

**Words of Assurance**

Rejoice! You who once lived in darkness – on you a new light is shining and the light of God's glory shall brighten your path. You are healed, loved and forgiven. Be at peace! Live in God's love, and bring hope and justice to all God's people.

**Affirming our Faith:**

*Apostles Creed*

**Offering**

**Offering, Tithes and Gifts** can be made on-line through our website (**St. James Only**), or by mailing your offering to: St. James UCC, 13312 Pioneer Road, Newton, WI 53063 OR St. Mark's UCC, W1307 Orchard Road, Cleveland, WI 53015

**Offertory Music**

*Thy Kingdom Come*

**Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving (all together)**

Lord, you have blessed our lives in so many ways. Receive our tithes, gifts and offerings. Multiply them and cause them to work in this world which you have loaned to us to make light shine in the darkness with peace and justice for all in this world. We offer these gifts in Jesus' name. *Amen*

**A Sending Forth Song**

*Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne*

**Benediction**

The trumpets of peace, joy and love are sounding in the land. We have heard God's word of healing love; we have seen joy radiate when God touches our lives; and we are challenged to share God's love. Go now, to love and serve the Lord. Go into your part of God's world bearing good news of God's abiding presence with us. Go in peace and may God's peace always be with you. Amen.

**Postlude**

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**This Week We Celebrate:**

Birthdays: Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> – Andrew Roelse  
16<sup>th</sup> – Janell Davis, Keith Mauk

Adopt-a-Family gifts due TODAY

## Lighting of The Advent Candles

One this third Sunday of Advent, as we think about the coming of Jesus Christ, we light the candle of joy. When Christ comes into our lives, he brings the fullness of joy. He anoints our hearts with the oil of gladness.

Today we light the Candles of Hope and Peace and Joy as we eagerly await the coming of our Lord and Savior. [Light the Candles]

When Jesus was born, the angels said that his coming was good news of great joy for all people. Because Jesus has come to us, we can live every day in the joy of the Lord. Praise be to his name!

Jesus, we pray, let the joy of this season shine forth from us, that we may bring light into the darkness of our world. *Amen.*

## Today's Scripture:

**Isaiah 61:1-2** <sup>1</sup>The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, <sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,

**Isaiah 61:10-11** <sup>10</sup>I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. <sup>11</sup>For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-24** <sup>16</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray continually, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not treat prophecies with contempt <sup>21</sup>but test them all; hold on to what is good, <sup>22</sup>reject every kind of evil. <sup>23</sup>May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

**John 1:6-8** <sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

**John 1:19-28** <sup>19</sup>Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. <sup>20</sup>He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah." <sup>21</sup>They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." <sup>22</sup>Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup>John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the LORD.'" <sup>24</sup>Now the Pharisees who had been sent <sup>25</sup>questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" <sup>26</sup>"I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. <sup>27</sup>He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." <sup>28</sup>This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

## The Apostles Creed

I believe in God the Father, Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord:  
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary:  
Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried:  
He descended into hell:  
The third day he rose again from the dead:  
He ascended into heaven,  
And sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty:  
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead:

I believe in the Holy Spirit:  
The One Holy Universal Christian Church:  
the communion of saints:  
The forgiveness of sins:  
The resurrection of the body:  
And the life everlasting. *Amen.*