



Sunday, December 17, 2023

*The Third Sunday of Advent*

St. James United Church of Christ  
Rev. Dr. Patrick Schultz, Pastor

Randy Sohn, Organist  
Cindy Sohn, Choir Director

*"Faith is a place of mystery where we find the courage to believe in what we cannot see and the strength to let go of our fear of uncertainty." [Brené Brown]*

Meditative Music  
Bells Ring  
Prelude Gathering for Worship:

*Fling Wide the Door*

### **Call to Worship:**

L: Come away from times of weariness. Dare to accept the energy God offers you.

**P: Restore our energy, O source of all power. Let your goodness flow through us.**

L: Come away from those myriads of distractions. Dare to let God show you a larger picture.

**P: Help us to examine the flow of our lives. Reveal to us what is really important.**

L: Come away from the scorn of enemies. Dare to laugh with those who have laughed at you.

**P: Lead us to think of others in new ways. Let us find grace and peace in Emmanuel.**

### **Prayer:**

**O God, you so loved the world as to give your only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Grant to us the precious gift of faith and help us to see your face and hear your voice in the refugee, the forgotten senior adult, the lonely child, the anxious parent. Help us to give our hearts and hand to bring beauty to their lives. In Christ's name. Amen.**

♪ *Angels We Have Heard on High*

#105

### **The Lighting of the Advent Candles Reading:**

O God, we your people have waited and travelled together in this Season of Advent. We have journeyed toward the light of Christ. In Jesus, the love of God burns brightly. After the excitement of Christmas has passed the love of God remains. God's love will burn like a candle in our hearts. May the light of hope, peace, joy and love guide our living and our loving. *Amen.*

### **Light the first, second and third Advent Candles**

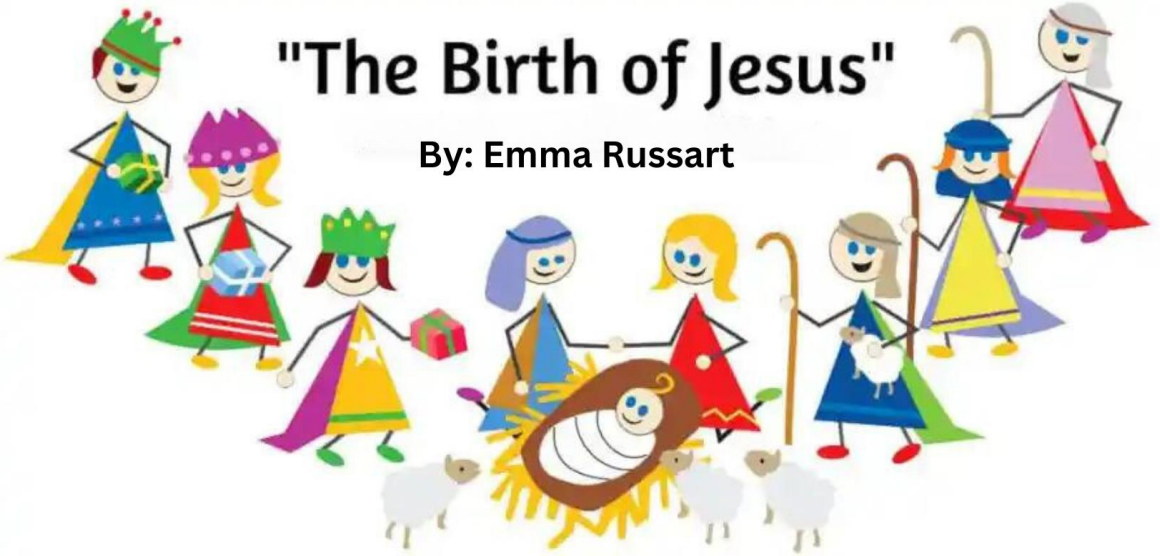
We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, just peace, and fierce joy. May our lives shine with the fierce, tenacious joy of the Light who lives in our hearts as we wait and work for the coming of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. *Amen.*

**Choral Anthem**

*Emmanuel*

# "The Birth of Jesus"

By: Emma Russart



- Narrator-Carson Russart, Wyatt Henschel, & Parker Sprenger
- Mary-Clara Lutze
- Joseph-Andrew Nye
- Angels-Hailey Henschel, Ella Roethel
- Shepherds-Austin Nye, Emmett Vogel, Jameson Binversie
- Wiseman 1-Carson Russart
- Wiseman 2-Parker Sprenger
- Wiseman 3-Wyatt Henschel
- Registrar-Emmett Vogel
- Innkeeper-Jameson Binversie

♪ *O Little Town of Bethlehem* plays as children walk down the aisle #108, all verses

♪ *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* #107, verses 1 & 2

♪ *Away in a Manger* #109, verses 1 & 2

♪ *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* #102, verses 1 & 2

♪ *Joy To The World* #120, all verses

### Offering:

The offering will be made as ushers bring the offering plates to you.  
St. James is also set up to take on-line offerings through the website ([stmstjucc.org](http://stmstjucc.org)).

### Offertory Music:

*Away in a Manger*

~ *The offering is brought to the altar* ~

### Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving:

God of hope, peace, and love: Let these offerings, gifts and tithes be given freely and joyfully that others may come to know the Lord and hear the Good News of His Salvation. May the lights on our Christmas trees echo the Light of Christ in our heart. And may we witness through our giving, not in scarcity and despair but joy, hope, and compassion. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

### People's Prayer ~ 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.

### ♪ *Come, Thou Almighty King*

#4

### Benediction:

Beloved, may you be blessed with fierce, tenacious joy that in all things—the highs, the lows, the rejoicing, and the sorrow—you may hold fast to and be held fast by the good news of Jesus Christ, the coming Messiah. *Amen*.

### Postlude:

*Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*



#### **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup>, CHRISTMAS EVE:**

10:00am-Christmas Caroling Service at St. James

~No Sunday School at Either Church

4:00pm-Worship Service with Communion at St. Mark's

7:00pm -Worship Service with Communion at St. Mark's


#### **MONDAY, DECEMBER 25<sup>TH</sup>, CHRISTMAS DAY:**

10:00am-Worship Service with Communion at St. James

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Services are recorded and available on our church YouTube channel:

St. Mark's & St. James UCC

Like us on Facebook 

Check out our Website: [www.stmstjucc.org](http://www.stmstjucc.org)

Join our prayer team; contact Karen in our Church office: [stmstjoffice@gmail.com](mailto:stmstjoffice@gmail.com)

# Staying Close, Staying Connected

## Our Church Celebrations!

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY THIS WEEK TO:**

*December 22<sup>nd</sup> – Michelle Scharl*

**NO ANNIVERSARIES THIS WEEK**



**December 27th is the deadline for making a contribution to St. James/St. Mark's UCC to have it recorded for 2023.**

**ST. MARK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM – TODAY, 5pm**  
(children please arrive at 4:30pm)

**NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE TOMORROW, MONDAY, DEC. 18<sup>TH</sup>.** Email them to Karen at [stmstjoffice@gmail.com](mailto:stmstjoffice@gmail.com)

**INFORMATION FOR THE ANNUAL REPORT** is due to Karen:  
St. Mark's-Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup>                      St. James-Jan. 9<sup>th</sup>.

Please just send one final copy of your report. It gets confusing when multiple copies are sent. Email to [stmstjoffice@gmail.com](mailto:stmstjoffice@gmail.com) or drop off a copy at St. Mark's of what you want included.

**ST. MARK'S CHOIR PRACTICE – Wednesday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 7pm**

# HS YOUTH CHRISTMAS PARTY – Friday, Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 7pm at St. James

**WE NEED SAFE SANCTUARY HELPERS**—an extra adult--to attend the high school youth group meetings. Please consider volunteering, it's a great way to get to know our wonderful HS youth!



**SUPPORT THE MISSION TEAM**  
To Elliot County, Kentucky

**KWIK TRIP CAR WASH CARDS**

\$36 FOR 5 ULTIMATE CAR WASHES (VALUED AT \$50)

It's that time of year! Time to gather those last-minute gifts and stocking stuffers for family, friends, teachers, co-workers, you name it. It's the perfect gift for any driver; salt and cars don't mix!

Available NOW through Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup>!

CONTACT: ANNA MARIE BRAMSTEDT (920)698-7656 OR ANY OTHER MEMBER

## Blue Christmas Service

**Thursday, December 21**  
**7:00pm**  
**Bethlehem United Church of Christ**  
**11608 Lax Chapel Rd.—Kiel**

It's OK, to not feel OK at Christmas.

Join us for a quiet contemplative service of song, scriptures, and candles.



## TAKE THE POLAR PLUNGE WITH PASTOR PATRICK ~ CARE KITS FOR THE HOMELESS



Pastor Patrick is taking pledges for the *Polar Bear Plunge* in Sheboygan on Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 at 1:00pm. The pledges will be used to reach his goal of making 100 Care Kits for the Homeless. You can pledge big for small as the Spirit leads you, either a flat donation or an incremental donation (ex., *I'll pledge \$2 for every 10 seconds you stay in; \$5 for 30 seconds; \$10 if you stay in the water for 1 min..*)

Sign up sheets are in the back of each church.

For more information contact Pastor Schultz at [schultzpw@gmail.com](mailto:schultzpw@gmail.com), 920-693-8361, or Facebook messenger

# GPS

**Grow** – deeper in our faith and relationship with God.

**Pray** – pray daily for family, neighbors, and others.

**Study** – read the Bible, pray over what we read, ask questions

## **Restore Us**

Restoration projects fascinate me. I grew up watching my dad restore antique furniture in his workshop. He would strip down the old layers, bring out the beauty of the natural grain of the wood and put on a protective coat of some finish – not hiding the natural beauty, but calling attention to it.

Growing up with dad as my role model, and eventually plying my hand at the trade, I learned to appreciate the hard work that goes into each stage of refinishing.

First and foremost is seeing the “piece” through the eyes of the creator, the carpenter, the builder... as a thing of beauty. Over the years that piece has been dinged up, scratched, notched, stained by spills and perhaps covered up with paint. One strives to remove the outer, ugly layers without damaging what lies under. One may try to keep the knocks, dings and dents accumulated over the years for they can often be worn as a badge of honor and can tell a story in and of themselves.

Then there is the sanding of the rough edges – sanding with finer and finer grains of sandpaper to ease out the scratches and bring to it new life. There may be a replacing of the old, discolored, beat up hardware with new – perhaps of shiny brass. And last is applying a shellac or varnish or lacquer to protect the appeal of the wood, prevent it from further damage and to make it look richer and deeper.

This is how I envision God at work in our lives. Rescuing, restoring, protecting us. Making us better and our lives richer and deeper. Praise be to God.

*Prayer:* Lord, may we be open to the improvements you make in and on our lives – even if the stripping and sanding is a bit painful. You are our Creator, Carpenter and Builder. We are in your hands now and always. *Amen.*

# NOTES:

**COME & JOIN US FOR WORSHIP ON SUNDAYS!**

**St. James UCC**

**1st & 3rd Sundays..... 10:30 a.m.**

**2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays..... 9:00 a.m.**

**~Sunday School meets 9-10am at both churches~**

**St. Mark's UCC**

**1st & 3rd Sundays..... 9:00 a.m.**

**2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays..... 10:30 a.m.**