



Sunday, December 17, 2023

The Third Sunday of Advent

St. Mark's United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Patrick Schultz, Pastor

Kathy Jurk, Organist

Advent Candle Reader and Lighter, Larry and Sandy Perronne,
Sandy Perronne, Reader

"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:

Lo, The Bridegroom Is At Hand

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*

#188

Young at Heart:



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.*

Scripture Reading:

Psalm 126 (NRSV)

*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
"The Lord has done great things for them."
The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.*

*Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.
May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.*

Message:

Rebuild the Nations, Bring Peace Among the People

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).

Offertory Music:

He Shall Feed His Flock

~ 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.

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:

Sing Ye With Gladness



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24TH, 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 25TH, CHRISTMAS DAY:

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

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

Join our prayer team; contact Karen in our Church office: stmstjoffice@gmail.com

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.

Staying Close, Staying Connected

Our Church Celebrations!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY THIS WEEK TO:

December 22nd – 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. 18TH. Email them to Karen at stmstjoffice@gmail.com

INFORMATION FOR THE ANNUAL REPORT is due to Karen:

St. Mark's-Jan. 2nd

St. James-Jan. 9th.

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

ST. MARK'S CHOIR PRACTICE – Wednesday, December 20th, 7pm

HS YOUTH CHRISTMAS PARTY – Friday, Dec. 22nd, 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!



SIGN UP FOR USHERING AT ST. MARK'S – either in the church entryway or online at: <https://bit.ly/usher2024>

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. 22nd!

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

A festive graphic with a light pink background. It features a red Santa hat with white snowflakes in the top left, a yellow gift box with a red ribbon in the top right, and various Christmas decorations like candy canes, snowflakes, and a red stocking with white stars scattered throughout.

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.

A photograph of several lit blue candles of varying heights. The flames are bright yellow and orange, casting a warm glow. The background is dark, making the blue of the candles stand out.

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. 1st, 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, 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: