

Gospel Lesson John 1:6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah." They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 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.'" Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

WELCOME TO ZION'S REFORMED CHURCH

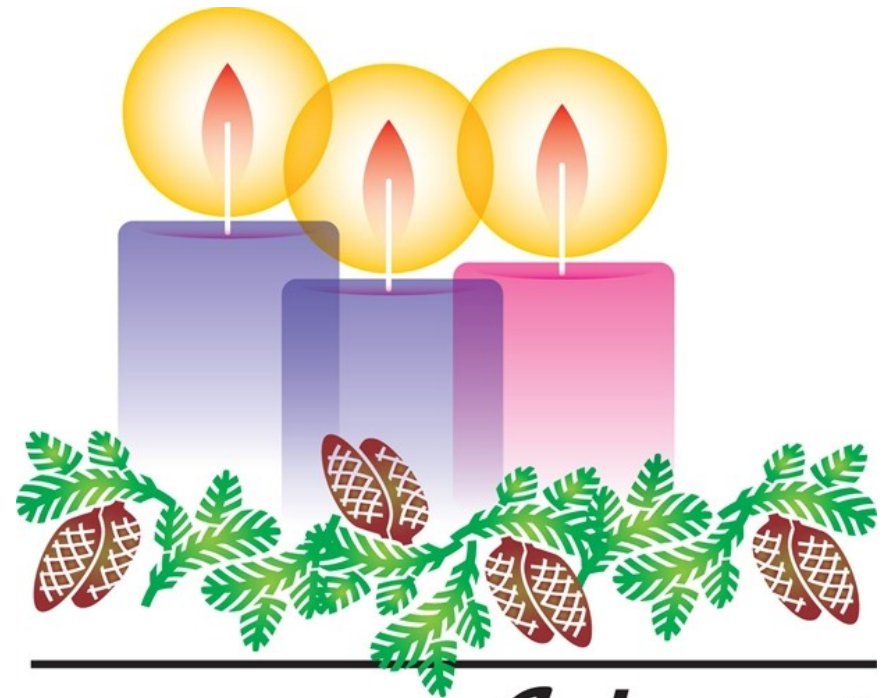
United Church of Christ

260 Main Street, Greenville, PA 16125

Phone: 724-588-6940

Church e-mail: info@zionsucc.org

Julie's cell: 724-815-3291



THIRD SUNDAY OF *Advent*



*Welcome to
Zion's Reformed
Church!
We're glad you're
here!*

We welcome Rev. Dr. Tim Morrison to the pulpit. Thank you for being here!

The Altar Flowers are in memory of my dad, by Julie Hills.

Ushering today are Vanessa Saylor, Linda Henry, Lori Tofani, Gianna Tofani and Alex Brown.

The children are invited to the Youth Center after Word for the Family for an activity.

The semi-annual Congregational meeting will be held immediately following the service in the sanctuary.

Everyone is invited to the Anderson Lounge for refreshments after the Congregational Meeting.

Large Print Bulletins and Children's Activity Books are available in the back of the sanctuary. Also, seat cushions and copies of the sermon. Please help yourself or ask an usher.

NEXT SUNDAY! December 24
Fourth Sunday of Advent Worship at 10:30.
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 7:00

Hebrew Lesson Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

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, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

“For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed.” 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. 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.

CHRISTMAS FUND FOR THE VETERANS OF THE CROSS

The Christmas Fund is an annual UCC offering that expresses our thanks to retired and active UCC pastors and lay church workers and their families facing financial need, providing direct assistance to supplement pensions, help with the cost of medical insurance, a thank you gift at Christmas, and funds to meet emergency needs. Gifts to the Christmas Fund make an immediate impact on those who have so faithfully served us over the years. Thanks to the generosity of UCC members and congregations, no request goes unfulfilled.

We will receive this offering on December 31. Please mark your check or envelope "UCC Christmas Fund".

*From Christ's fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.
(John 1:16)*



Congratulations to Kennedy and Laris Bielata who each received a check for \$1000.00 from the Cooper and Forsyth Scholarship funds. Best of luck to both of you as you continue your education at Thiel College!

ZION'S REFORMED UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Rev. Dr. Tim Morrison

Lori Seinar-Roknick, Director of Music Ministries

*Please rise in body or spirit, as you are able.

December 17, 2023 10:30 a.m.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Where the past and the future with Jesus Christ are celebrated so the present can be lived abundantly.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Karen Galus, Lector

THE SOLEMN DECLARATION

Leader: And now may we prepare our hearts and minds for worship as we are gathered in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE RINGING OF THE CHIMES

THE ENTRANCE OF LIGHT Emilee Deeter, Acolyte

~Please use prelude time for thought, reflection and prayer~

PRELUDE "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent" Craig Curry

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: God calls us to bring good tidings to the afflicted.

People: God challenges us to bind up the broken hearted.

Leader: God charges us to proclaim liberty to those who are bound.

People: We gather in worship to renew our purpose in being God's people.

*OPENING HYMN NO. 126 "Angels, from the Realms of Glory"

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

Leader: Wait upon the Lord; remain true and let your hearts be bold!

People: **We do wait upon the Lord, and we seek God's healing power.**

Leader: In confidence let us come before God to confess our sins.

People: **We trust God to hear and accept our confession.**

***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

In so many ways, God, you have tried to reach us with your message of love, grace, and forgiveness. Far too often we have been too busy with the world around us to hear your message. You have sent your Son to show us your love. Yet we have often failed to see him and Your love. Forgive us for our blindness and our limited vision. We open our hearts to your Good News. Empower us to spread that good news to all the world around us. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Leader: God is near to all whose hearts rest in God's loving care.

People: **We know that God is the keeper of our souls.**

Leader: God forgives us and sets us free.

People: **Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

~before you sit down, please greet someone near you~

LIGHTING OF THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE - LOVE

George Donner and Emilee Deeter

Leader: Christmas is a time of worship;

People: **The moment when the busiest of us pause in wonder.**

Leader: Christmas happens when God comes to us in love through Jesus Christ.

People: **And we are filled with love for all of humankind.**

Congregational Meeting

Following the
Worship Service



The semi-annual congregational meeting will be held immediately following the service today in the sanctuary. The budget will be presented for approval. All members are encouraged to stay.

GOOD SHEPHERD DINNER

Tomorrow (December 18) the Ministry of Service and Missions are serving the Christmas meal at The Good Shepherd Center. Donations of cookies and rolls are needed. Please bring them to the church or take them directly to the kitchen at The Good Shepherd Center.

Dinner
is
served.



I Wonder as I Wander

Appalachian Carol
John Jacob Niles

I WONDER AS I WANDER *Irregular*
John Jacob Niles
Harm. by John Ferguson, 1973

Unison Gm Cm

1. I won - der as I wan - der, out un - der the sky, How
 2. When Mar - y birthed Je - sus, 'twas in a cow's stall, With
 3. If Je - sus had want - ed for an - y wee thing, A
 4. I won - der as I wan - der, out un - der the sky, How

Je - sus the Sav - ior did come for to die For
 wise men and farm - ers and shep - herds and all. •But
 star in the sky or a bird on the wing, Or
 Je - sus the Sav - ior did come for to die For

poor ord' - nary peo - ple like you and like I; I
 high from God's heav - en a star's light did fall, The
 all of God's an - gels in heav'n for to sing, He
 poor ord' - nary peo - ple like you and like I; I

won - der as I wan - der, out un - der the sky.
 prom - ise of a - ges it did then re - call.
 sure - ly could have it, 'cause he was the King.
 won - der as I wan - der, out un - der the sky.

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Leader: We light this candle and proclaim the coming of the light of God into the world.

People: **With the coming of this light there is love entering the world.**

Leader: Such great love helps us to love God and one another.

People: **Peace, hope, love.....the promises of Advent.**

CHOIR ANTHEM "Advent Jubilate" John Parker/Victoria Schwarz

WORD FOR THE FAMILY "A Light Shines in the Darkness"

HYMN "I Wonder as I Wander" (bulletin page 8)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Hebrew Lesson Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 (bulletin page 11)

Gospel Lesson John 1:6-8, 19-28 (back of bulletin)

SERMON "John the Witness"

A TIME OF PRAYER AND LAYING ON OF HANDS

Rev. Tim and Pastor Glenn will stand on the sanctuary floor. Any who wish to experience laying on of hands and personal prayer are invited to come forward to either pastor. We invite everyone to engage in quiet prayer during this time or you may wish to turn in a pew Bible and read Psalm 8 or Psalm 23 or Psalm 139. We will then join in the responsive prayers of the people and the Lord's prayer.

RESPONSIVE PRAYERS and LORD'S PRAYER

Leader: In the Spirit of this season, let us now confidently ask God for all the things we need for ourselves as we participate in whatever way we can this Christmas.

People: **God hear our prayer.**

Leader: For our families and friends that they may continue to help and support us.

People: God hear our prayer.

Leader: For the person we have loved that has died, for all the losses that we know, that all may be redeemed by your Easter promises.

People: God hear our prayer.

Leader: For all our family and friends that they may know love and peace and happiness in you.

People: God hear our prayer.

Leader: For the peace proclaimed by the Christmas angels to come throughout the whole world.

People: God hear our prayer.

Leader: Loving God, you are the only source of health and healing and hope. You are the spirit of calm and the central peace of this universe. Grant to all, the blessings and healing and forgiveness that are sought. We pray in the name of the Christ who is born anew in this season and who as a teacher taught us to pray together saying:

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.

OFFERING OUR GIFTS

Invitation

Offertory Music "Still, Still, Still" Ben Logan

*Doxology No. 780

*Unison Prayer of Dedication

All-wise and all-powerful God, for reasons only You can fathom You have honored us by calling Your prophets from among Your people to proclaim the Good News to the world. We ask that you receive these our gifts and bless them that they will help bring healing and hope throughout the world. Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN NO. 117 "Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates"

*BENEDICTION

*TAKING THE LIGHT INTO THE WORLD

*THE POSTLUDE "Fling Wide the Door" Joseph Prentiss

TWICE ON SUNDAY!

Somewhere on the internet, someone wrote this: "Twice on Sunday" is an expression that means doing something to an extreme degree or with great intensity. It's often used to emphasize the thoroughness or frequency of an action, implying that it's done not just once, but twice, and specifically on Sunday, which is traditionally a day of rest or leisure for many people.

It is a rare occasion that Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday, which means, we have church twice that day! And both services are important to our celebration of Advent and Christmas!

The fourth Sunday of Advent (JOY) will be celebrated at 10:30 a.m. and the Christmas Eve Candlelight service will be at 7:00 p.m. Both services will be led by Pastor Glenn and include anthems by the Chancel Choir.

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU "TWICE" ON SUNDAY!