

## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 1, 2024

Luke 21:25-36

### Sign of Things to Come

The stone cathedral was dim and dank, with only a few souls scattered among the pews softly singing the hymn, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!*

With the last note wafting in the air, a candle was lit in a circle of evergreen — the Advent wreath. It was the only sign of the season in the sanctuary. There were no pine boughs strewn from the balcony nor poinsettias gracing the windowsills. They would come later.

For now, it was just the flickering flame of a lone candle urging on a weary world to rejoice.

It was the beginning of Advent, the four-weeks leading to Christmastide. A time for quiet reflection, patient waiting and expectant watching.

But beyond the cathedral's doors, Christmas joy was in full swing with crowds swarming an open-air market — lights twinkling and speakers blaring songs about chestnuts roasting over open fires.

Yes, tis the season — of missing Advent's message that before celebrating what God has done for us through Jesus, we must first be still. We must watch for the signs of God's realm drawing near, signs that can be easily missed amid the traditional trappings of Christmas, which appear earlier each year.

Now it's understandable why Advent quickly morphs into Christmas. We are a people who find it hard to wait, and we certainly don't want to be walking in darkness. We want immediate gratification and light — lots of it.

Another reason Advent doesn't get the attention it deserves is that it clashes with our cultural expectations of the holidays with scripture readings that are more apocalyptic than jolly. Luke's Gospel is the perfect example of this, as we hear about the signs that will appear in the sun, moon and stars when the Son of Man returns.

Advent, which comes from the Latin word *adventus* means "coming." And so, we are not just celebrating Jesus' first coming as the Babe of Bethlehem, but we are anticipating his return as well.

What are the signs to look for today?

Perhaps beyond the artificial holiday lights we might see a sign of God's true light shining in our communities. Perhaps, if we looked into the eyes of the homeless, the disabled, and the stranger, we would see the sign that God is right in front of us.

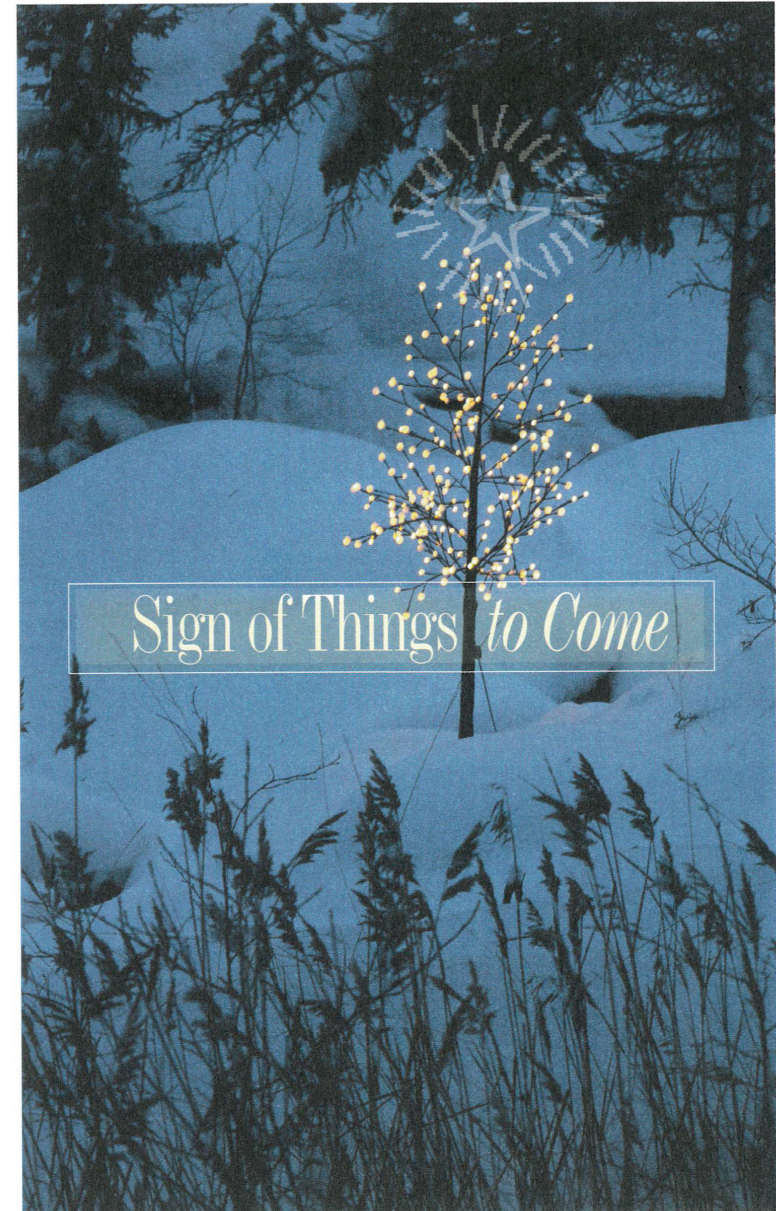
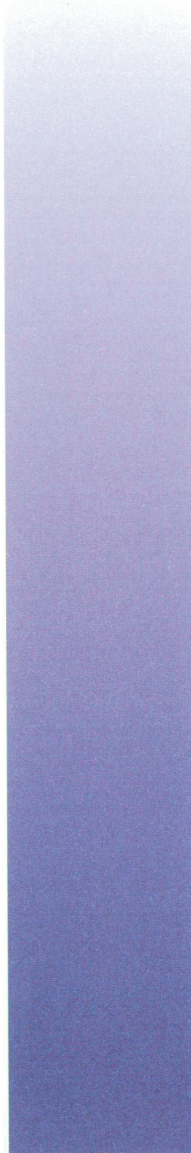
Perhaps, if we entered a quiet sacred space this Advent, where the only light burning is that of the first candle around the Advent wreath, we would see the sign that there really is a light in which no darkness can overcome.

*God of Advent waiting and hoping, we pray that You open our eyes to the many signs of a weary world being redeemed. May we remain alert to the very things that matter the most to You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*



8 1/2" x 14" UCC SUNDAY BULLETIN SERVICE

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St. John's United Church of Christ  
**First Sunday of Advent**  
**December 1, 2024**



\* Please stand if it is comfortable to do so. **Bold print** is everyone in unison

**WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, GREET ONE ANOTHER** (be seated)  
**CHURCH BELL** (the bell invites us to worship) **PRELUDE**  
**GOD CALLS US TO WORSHIP** (responsively)

Awake from sleep.  
**Raise weary bodies.**  
 Light a candle in the cold and dark.  
**One candle to chase away the night and herald the coming light.**  
 This is the time of readying the heart.  
**This is the day for steps toward the stable.**

\***OPENING HYMN** *The Way Prepare* (tune: *Deck the Halls*)

\***WE INVITE GOD TO WORSHIP** (unison)

**Come, Lord Jesus, come. Come into our midst. Come into our hearts. Come into our homes and our community, into our schools and workplaces. May we welcome you everywhere, making room for you, preparing for you, anticipating your arrival with joy and reverence. We commit this season of Advent to becoming ready. Shine your light in those nooks and crannies we keep in the shadows. Sweep the cobwebs from our long-hidden doubt and fear. Repair our torn and wounded places. We long for your arrival. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.**

\***RESPONSE** Come, O Long Expected Jesus (v.1) #125

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH**-the Doggett family (on screen)

**CHILDREN'S MESSAGE** *Jesus Loves Me*

**DEDICATION OF NEW KEYBOARDS**

**OFFERING INVITATION\*\***

Let us give back to God with gratitude for all blessings received.

\***RESPONSE** *In the Bleak Midwinter* (v.4)

\***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (unison)

**Generous God, thank you for the gifts you bestow upon us daily. Bless what we bring before you to bless others; we pray. Amen.**

**ANTHEM** *Born to be the Bread*

**SCRIPTURE:** Old Testament: Jeremiah 33:14-16

New Testament: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

L: The Word of God for the People of God **P: Thanks be to God**

**MESSAGE** *The Right Path*

**SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION**

Invitation & Communion Prayer

God be with you. **And also with you.**  
 Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to God.**  
 Let us give thanks to God Most High.

**It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Words of Institution: Consecration and Sharing of the Elements

Thanksgiving Prayer (unison)

**We thank you, God, for inviting us to this table where we have known the presence of Christ and have received all Christ's gifts. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another and let us show forth your praise in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

\***CLOSING HYMN** *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* (vs. 1 & 2) #119

\***BLESSING** (responsively)

Go forth and begin the journey of Advent. Begin your preparations, start the planning, and look to the future, but in all you're doing, keep focused on the great gift, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ Child of Bethlehem.

**May the Lord make hope grow within us as together we await Christ's coming. Amen.**

\* **CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE** *Go In Peace* #445

\* **POSTLUDE**

\*\*You may place your offering in the plate at the back of the sanctuary or online at myucc.org and click on the *contribute* button. Please prayerfully consider setting up regular online donations to continue our outreach into the community.

## ST. JOHN'S UCC STAFF and VOLUNTEERS

Pastor	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
Liturgist	Ren Simmons
Head Usher	Steve Cooper
Organist	DeEtta Welte
Music Director, Pianist	Becky Brockman
Children /Family Ministry Coordinator	Will Meyer
Nursery Attendant	Darcie Bahr
Projection	Jana Vieck
Sound	Andrew Anson
Church Secretary	Angie Robinson
Church Board President	Jana Vieck
Greeters	Owen Schotter and Vera Mattingly



Virtual Worship Service is still available on the church website, [myucc.org](http://myucc.org). Worship Services are also "Live Streamed" on the Church's FACEBOOK page



### **THIS WEEK in the Life of St. John's**

#### **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1**

Adult Sunday School 9:15 am

Worship 10:30 am

Children's Church

Youth Group 6 pm– 7:15 pm

#### **MONDAY, DECEMBER 2**

BABE Store 12-5:30 pm

Friends 5-6:15 pm Holiday Dinner First Baptist Church

Evangelism & Membership 6:30 pm

#### **TUESDAY December 3**

Sandy's Pantry 11-12:30 pm

#### **WEDNESDAY, December 4**

Choir 7pm

Messy Church 5:30-7 pm

#### **THURSDAY, December 5**

Sandy's Pantry 11-12:30 pm

Girl Scouts 4 pm

Dinner & Conversation 6 pm Kelso's

#### **FRIDAY, December 6**

Phoebe's Mission 4:30-6 pm

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

#### **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8**

Adult Sunday School 9:15 am

Worship 10:30 am Ugly Sweater Sunday

Children's Church

CFM Family Holiday Dinner 6 pm

#### **MONDAY, DECEMBER 9**

BABE Store 12-5:30 pm

Friends 5-6:15 pm

Outreach & Missions 6:30 pm

#### **WEDNESDAY, December 11**

Choir 7pm

Christian Education 6 pm

#### **THURSDAY, December 12**

Dinner & Conversation 6 pm Café Moonlight



**ADVENT  
CELEBRATION!**

Sunday, December 1, 2024  
St. John's United Church of Christ



11:30 – 12:00 **Sandwich Luncheon**

12:00 – 2:00 **Crafts and More**

Come, bring your family and friends, and join us for food, lots of crafts, bell ringing, Christmas card making, games, tree trimming, and great fellowship!





**Continuing Prayer Requests: Bruce Deckard, Gary Meyer, Don Osborne, Jr., Carole Klein's family, Franklyn Schroeder's family, and Luis Prada (pastor Debbie's brother-in-law). Let's include everyone in our prayers for the silent trials and struggles everyone is carrying.**

- Please Laura Sanders, wife of Eric Sanders and the sister-in-law and aunt to the family of Chris Sanders in our church, had surgery on Nov. 26th. She has been approved for the trial with radiation tiles. Please keep Laura in your prayers for the surgery and the treatment plan to be successful. Her family would benefit from prayers of support too.
- Patrick Gott has been admitted to the hospital this past week; please keep him and the family in your prayers.

**Addresses for Shut-ins and Others**

**Norma Meyer, Colonial Assisted Living,-** Room 142, 1622 Hart Street Road, Vincennes, IN 47591  
**Susie Milligan, Colonial Assisted Living,-** Room 118, 1622 S Hart Street Road, Vincennes, IN 47591  
**Leona Conway, Aperia Care ,-** (Willow Manor under new ownership) C Wing Room 3, Vincennes, IN 47591 (Please send all church correspondence to this address going forward).  
**Marge Beamon, The Villages at Oak Ridge, -**1694 Troy Rd. Washington, IN 47501

**Home**  
**Bruce Deckard**  
**Gary Meyer**  
**Michael Lankford**  
**Gayle Huffer**  
**Ellen Riggs**



If you have a caregiving need such as a hospital stay, a visit or desire communion, please contact the church office, Janet Goodman (co-chair of Caregivers) or any caregiver listed below. We would appreciate your help and want to make sure everyone is blessed by St. John's when you need it! [St. John's UCC Caregivers](#)- Ed and Brenda Cummings, Cindy Deckard (co-chair), Connie and Dan Coulter, Peggy Meyer, Ray Pieper, Terry and Janet Goodman, Lonny Vieck, Larry and Betsy Marchino.

**SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:**

A church that is alive needs the generous, sacrificial support of those who love it. Only a dead church demands no sacrifice.

Have you ever heard someone say, "My church is always asking for money. I wish I belonged to a church that never needed money."

Surely they don't mean that. Any church that is alive needs money. Only dead churches do not call on their members for support. If anyone should accuse your church of always needing and calling for money, regard it as a compliment.

Invite this person to rejoice with you that you both belong to something that is living and productive for Jesus Christ rather than a dead, stagnant organization from which glory of Christ has departed.

**MESSY CHURCH** is on December 4th from 5:30-7:00 p.m. Our theme is ADVENT-ure! Activities will include a variety of crafts, including an advent wreath, manger ornament, games, and much more. Dinner will be chicken and noodles, green beans, and grapes. Worship will be interactive and include a recap of everything we learned. Everyone is welcome at Messy Church, including our own church families. Messy Church will continue on the first Wednesday of each month.

**CONFIRMATION CLASS** will meet on December 1st from 5:00-6:00 p.m. to discuss: What is Advent? What we Believe about God, Jesus & the Holy Spirit.

- December Assignments:
- Complete and turn in Old Testament Bible Study
  - Watch Jesus of Nazareth Part 2 on YouTube
  - Memorize New Testament Books of the Bible

**December Service Opportunities**

December 1st: Advent Festival after worship till 2:00

Assist with Children's Christmas Program (presented on 12/15)

**UGLY SWEATER DAY:** Grab your "ugliest" Christmas sweater and wear it to worship on December 8th. Join in the fun as we celebrate the season.

**HAT & MITTEN TREE:** A bare Christmas tree stands in our entry, ready to be decorated with hats, mittens, gloves, and scarves to be given to children in need at Riley Elementary. Please help decorate our tree with these items.