

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 15, 2024

Luke 3:7-18

Look Forward

There was a cartoon a few years ago making the social media rounds of John the Baptist, arms flailing in anger, pointing to some religious bigwigs. In the picture were also snakes slithering away. The text read, “Happy Advent! You brood of vipers.”

While we might chuckle at first, beneath the brevity is a sobering message. John is calling out the corruption that’s often lurking behind seemingly good deeds.

In John’s case, he is angry with the hypocrisy of the religious elite. They claim to be righteous, but they are just a brood of vipers — snakes slithering away so as not to get consumed by fire. In the agriculture society of the time, people would have been familiar with this image, as snakes would flee for safety when the stubble in fields was burned to prepare for a new planting.

While we might not have witnessed snakes escaping the burning stubble in fields, we have seen — or know of — people who have turned their backs on organized religion because words and actions didn’t match up.

During the holidays, especially, we hear stories of scams claiming to help others when really the money donated lines a pocket that doesn’t need lining. Vipers are out there, but so are obedient sheep.

Take for instance a logger in a rural community who, upon hearing of a severe shortfall in the village’s community fuel fund, took it upon himself to give away wood — his bread and butter — to help others heat their homes. The logger, who didn’t belong to any church, helped many people survive that winter.

Yes, there will always be a brood of vipers in this world, but may we be the ones this Advent season who listen to John, giving away a coat and sharing food with those in need.

Look around your community and begin asking what are the unmet needs? And may you find it in your heart to give like that logger who gave from what little he had himself.

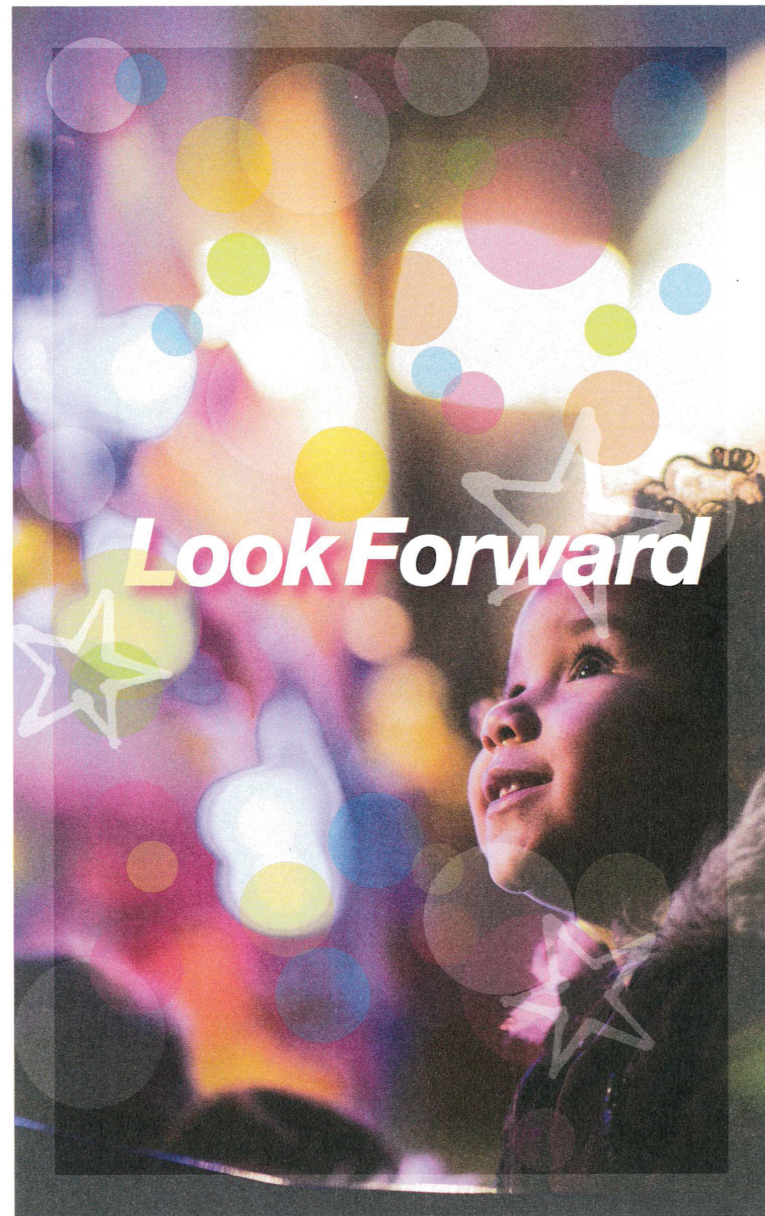
Gracious God, as we draw closer to Christmas, may we realize that we have more than enough and plenty to share with Your children who hunger, thirst and are naked. Release our grips on all that we cling to tightly. Increase our trust that with You, our daily bread will always be sufficient. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.



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

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BUL0203





St. John's United Church of Christ
Third Sunday of Advent
December 15, 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)

Come, let us prepare ourselves with open hearts for the Christmas story,
And hear the angel's disturbing message.
 Then, like Joseph, with firm faith in God,
Let us make room for Jesus in our lives.

***OPENING HYMN** *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (vs. 1-2) #144

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

Gracious God, we are a people of many distractions, pulled in different directions, responding to multiple and often conflicting needs. We thank you for the gifts of Sabbath and worship, for a space and a time to set aside everything that tugs at us and instead focus our hearts and minds on you. Quiet our spirits so we may hear your Spirit speaking to us. Amen.

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

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH-Schotter Family

CHILDREN'S MOMENT *Jesus Loves Me*

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)

O Emmanuel, what do we have to offer to you? Just as Mary and Joseph were blessed by being the parents of Jesus because they were faithful to you, so we, too, in our act of offering the fruit of our labor, our time and talents, put our trust and our lives in your almighty hands. Amen.

WE GATHER IN PRAYER

Silent Prayers – Pastoral Prayer-The Lord's Prayer (debts/debtors)

Congregational Response: *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* (chorus) #119

SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:46b-55

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

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM - One Small Child

***CLOSING HYMN** *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice* #164

***BLESSING** (responsively)

Here is the word of Christmas - the strength in which we too -- just like the shepherds - can return glorifying and praising God for all that we have seen; the faith and hope in which we can rejoice, not only in this blessed season, but on every blessed day of life from here until the dawning of the kingdom.

Good Christian friends, rejoice - Jesus Christ was born to save! 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 clicking 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	Bill Lathrop
Head Usher	Steve Cooper
Organist	DeEtta Welte
Music Director, Pianist	Becky Brockman
Children /Family Ministry Coordinator	Will Meyer
Nursery Attendant	Darcie Bahr
Projection	Jill Doggett
Sound	Jonathan Lange
Church Secretary	Angie Robinson
Church Board President	Jana Vieck
Greeters	Joel & Carson Sanders



Virtual Worship Service is still available on the church website, 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 15

Adult Sunday School 9:15 am
Fellowship 10 am
Worship 10:30 am
Children's Church
Children Christmas Program
CFM Family Holiday Dinner 6 pm

MONDAY, DECEMBER 16

Worship Comm 6 pm
Church Board 7 pm
BABE Store 12-5:30 pm
Friends 5-6:15 pm

WEDNESDAY, December 18

Choir 7pm
Laundry Love 6-8 pm

THURSDAY, December 19

Girl Scouts 4 pm

Phoebe's Mission

What Is Phoebe's Mission?



This ministry helps low income families stretch their money by providing necessary household items that cannot be purchased with food stamps. Each month, families can stop by and pick up a box of toiletries and cleaning supplies donated by St. John's members.



How Can I Help?

Phoebe's Mission relies on the support of individuals from St. John's UCC.

- Donations For The Following:
 - Laundry Soap
 - Bar Soap
 - Deodorant
 - Shampoo
 - Toothpaste
 - Dish Soap
 - Toilet Paper
- An Extra Donation In Your Pledge Envelope Marked "Phoebe's Mission"
- Cash Donation Dropped Off In The Church Office Marked "Phoebe's Mission"

HOURS OF OPERATION

First Friday
Of Each Month
4:30 - 6:00 pm

Contact
Will Meyer
812-882-2720

LOOKING AHEAD
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22
Adult Sunday School 9:15 am
Worship 10:30 am
Children's Church
Children Christmas Program
MONDAY, DECEMBER 23
BABE Store 12-5:30 pm
Friends 5-6:15 pm
TUESDAY, December 24
Christmas Worship @ 7 pm
WEDNESDAY, December 25
Christmas Day
Office Closed



Continuing Prayer Requests: Laura Sanders, 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

- Patrick Gott has been admitted to the hospital this past week; please keep him and the family in your prayers.
- Please keep Norma Phegley in your prayers as she goes through this difficult time of losing her son.
- Vern Houchins has a lot of back pain and is losing motor control and strength in his legs quickly. MRI shows a herniated disc and fracture of some sort. Hopefully, surgery will be on Monday if all doctors approve.
- Mark Welte is in need of prayers; he had a fall that caused some head injuries.
- Gary Meyer's mother, Norma Meyer, who resides at Colonial Assisted Living, fell Wednesday night, resulting in a shattered hip and broken clavicle. She will have surgery tomorrow at 10:30. Thank you for offering prayers for her comfort and healing.

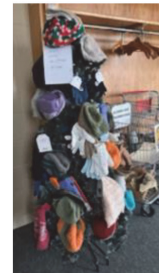
Addresses for Shut-ins and Others

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.



Flowers this morning are in memory of Carole Klein's birthday on December 15th from the Klein family.



HAT & MITTEN TREE: The hat & mitten 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.

NEXT SUNDAY we will fill and close the time capsule to be opened during the Church's 200th Anniversary in 2049.

CHRISTMAS EVE worship will be held at 7:00 p.m. with Jonathan Clark providing special music. It will be a traditional Candle lighting service of Lessons and Carols.



MESSY CHURCH will be held on January 8th from 5:30-7:00 pm. The theme is *There's Snow-body Like You*. Lots of activities, Boomwhackers, with a Taco Bar and Nanchos for dinner. Join us!