

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 22, 2024

Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

Moving with Mary's Song

A bit of trivia on this the fourth Sunday of Advent. What's one of the earliest Advent hymns ever to be recorded? (Hint: It's found in today's reading from Luke.)

It's Mary's song of praise, also known as The Magnificat, which is Latin for "my soul magnifies the Lord."

Mary, the teen betrothed to Joseph, whose life has been turned upside down when an angel tells her she has found favor with God and will bear a son, goes to visit her cousin, Elizabeth. Elizabeth is also with child, carrying the wilderness wandering baptizer, John.

When the two women meet, the child in Elizabeth's womb leaps with joy and she says to Mary, "Blessed are you among women!"

Such a greeting would lead any person to break out in song — as Mary does. But her words are not the maternal sentiments one might expect. Rather, 20th-century German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis for his role in speaking out against Hitler, described Mary's song as, "the most passionate, the wildest, most revolutionary Advent hymn ever sung."

This is no meek and mild Mary cast in the glow of heavenly light that we see on Christmas cards. This, says Bonhoeffer, is "the passionate and enthusiastic Mary who speaks out there."

Mary's song reminds us just what Christmas — this Christ moment — is all about. She sings of God who fills the hungry with good things. She sings of God who sends the rich away empty. She sings to the One who lifts the lowly — to the One who does great things through people like her who are often deemed unworthy.

Sadly, we live in a world where the lowly still get pushed to the side, silenced and ignored. But as Advent comes to an end — and soon we will be singing about holy and silent nights — can we take a moment once again to listen to Mary's song, believing how God is still doing great things for many Marys — and Toms, Rauls, Juans, Anitas, and you.

Yes, YOU. For God is wanting to use your life as well in making this world a better place for all.

The Magnificat is not filled with *fa la las*. It is a "hard, strong song," says Bonhoeffer, one which "tells of the power of God and the powerlessness of humankind."

And that is exactly why Mary sings it for us this day.

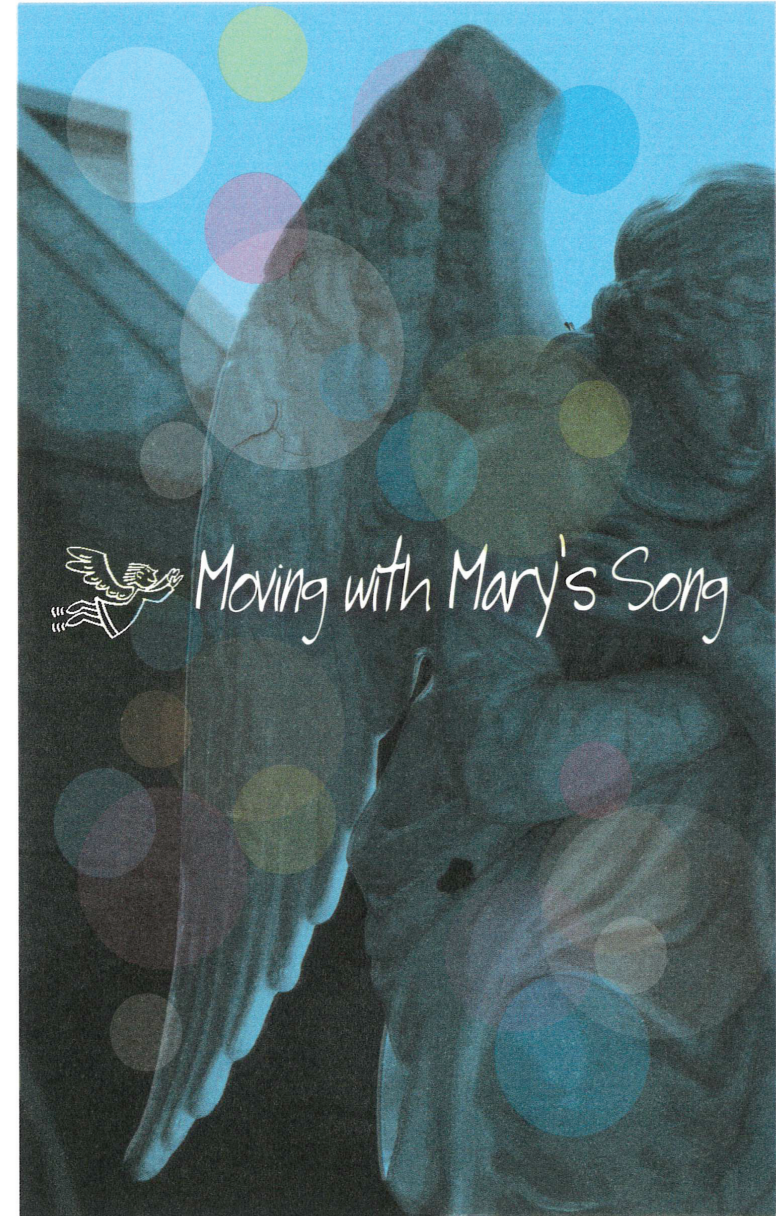
Amazing God, who works through us all, may this day we move with Mary's song, tapping our feet, snapping our fingers, and singing praises of how You are indeed doing great things among us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



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

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BUL0204





St. John's United Church of Christ
Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 22, 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)

This is the time of Advent.

Carols are sung; the ears of the heart awaken and listen.

Candles glow; children's eyes grow wide with wonder.

The stars twinkle; heads tilt back in a moment of awe.

Christmas is stirring in every corner.

Joy creeps into our hearts and praise leaps from our voices.

* **OPENING HYMN** *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear* (vs. 1-2) #153

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

Ever Present God, in the darkness of Mary's womb, the holy Child grows. In the darkness of the world's pain, the blessed light begins to kindle. In the darkness of our own doubting of you and our lack of faith in ourselves, the great hope begins to rise again like a lump in the throat. Christ will be born again into our world and into us. Let the love of Christ shine in us like a wondrous star. Amen.

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

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH- Coomes Family

CLOSING OF THE TIME CAPSULE FOR 200th ANNIVERSARY

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)

Source of life, may the works of our hands bring you honor. May the life we live reflect the risen Word of life. May the service we offer be inspired by the Breath of life. Amen.

WE GATHER IN PRAYER

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

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

ANTHEM

Bread of Heaven

SCRIPTURE: Old Testament: Micah 5:2-5a

New Testament: Luke 1:39-45

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

MESSAGE *An Upside Down Story*

* **CLOSING HYMN** *O Thou Joyful* #169

* **BLESSING** (responsively)

Beyond the darkness, there is a star. Beyond the noise, there is an angel song. Beyond the rush, there is a wondrous stillness.

May the God of Advent days touch our lives with hints of a holy night.

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

* **POSTLUDE**

ST. JOHN'S UCC STAFF and VOLUNTEERS

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Pastor | Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins |
| Liturgist | Janet Daniels |
| Head Usher | Steve Cooper |
| Organist | DeEtta Welte |
| Music Director, Pianist | Becky Brockman |
| Children /Family Ministry Coordinator | Will Meyer |
| Nursery Attendant | Darcie Bahr |
| Projection | Sandra Lange |
| Sound | Lonny Vieck |
| Church Secretary | Angie Robinson |
| Church Board President | Jana Vieck |
| Greeters | Jay Cole |

CHRISTMAS EVE worship, "Lessons and Carols", will be held at 7 pm with Jonathan Clark, Vera Mattingly, and others providing special music and leadership. The service will conclude with the traditional candle lighting.

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 Nachos for dinner. Join us!

HAT & MITTEN TREE: Thank you to all who have donated and decorated the foyer tree with hats, mittens, gloves, and scarves. Children in need at Riley Elementary are the recipients of your kindness.

ADULT BIBLE STUDY on *The Gnostic Gospels* will be held at 10:30 & 6:30 on Tuesdays, January 20, 27, & February 4, 11. The Gnostic Gospels are 52 texts discovered in 1945 in Nag Hammadi, Egypt. They include 'secret' gospels poems and myths attributing to Jesus sayings and beliefs which are very different from the New Testament. We will be focusing on the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Phillip*.

For over 100 years, **The Christmas Fund** has been caring for active and retired clergy, plus lay employees of the United Church of Christ, by providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to our lower-income retirees. Please consider giving using the Christmas Fund envelopes in your bulletin.



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 22**

Adult Sunday School 9:15 am
Worship 10:30 am Fill and Close New Time Capsule
Children's Church

MONDAY, DECEMBER 23
BABE Store 12-5:30 pm
Friends 5-6:15 pm

TUESDAY, December 24
Christmas Eve Worship @ 7 pm

WEDNESDAY, December 25
Christmas Day
Office Closed

LOOKING AHEAD **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29**

Pastor Debbie out of Office
Adult Sunday School 9:15 am
Worship 10:30 am
Children's Church

MONDAY, DECEMBER 30
Pastor Debbie out of Office
BABE Store 12-5:30 pm
Friends 5-6:15 pm

TUESDAY, December 31
Pastor Debbie out of Office
New Year's Eve

WEDNESDAY, January 1
Pastor Debbie out of Office
New Year's Day
Office Closed

FRIDAY January 3
Pastor Debbie out of Office
Phoebe's Mission 4:30-6 pm



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 is carrying.

- Continued prayers for **Patrick Gott**, Gabrielle Gerhardt's husband, who remains at Deaconess. **Donna Gerhardt** is recovering from Covid. Prayers appreciated for this family.
- Please keep **Norma Phegley** in your prayers as she grieves the death of her son.
- Vern Houchins** continues to consult with his physicians. Please continue praying for Vern and Marilyn.
- Norma Meyer**, Gary Meyer's mother, is recovering from surgery after a recent fall.
- Continued prayers are appreciated for Eric and Cheryl Meyer's Niece's husband, **Warren**. He is home recovering from a successful heart ablation procedure.

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, Aperion Care, - 3801 C Wing Room 3, Old Bruceville Rd , Vincennes, IN 47591
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.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH - LOVE

Jeremy, Natasha, Rylan, Harper & Confirmand Delaynee Coomes

Responsive Litany

During Advent, we ignite the wonder of expectation.
Open our eyes, O Lord, to behold your glory.
 During Advent, we look for the light that shines in the darkness.
Open our eyes, O Lord, to behold your glory.
 During Advent, we embrace the hope that enlivens the soul.
Open our eyes, O Lord, to behold your glory.
 During Advent, we welcome the Savior who beckons the world.
Open our eyes, O Lord, to behold your glory.
 During Advent, we rejoice in the One who has reclaimed the lost.
Open our eyes, O Lord, to behold your glory.

Candle Lighting

Today, we light four candles. The first blue candle calls us to behold the glory of the season with renewed wonder and hope. Advent is a time to be awed by God's redeeming love for the lost and broken. The second blue candle calls us to reclaim the promises of God spoken in ages past and prepare for the Divine coming. As the light fills this room, so the Word of God fills our world with hope for the hurting, peace for the restless, and joy for the heavy-hearted. The third candle is pink and serves as an invitation to joyously wait patiently upon the Lord. In a world where we often lack for patience, Advent reminds us to rest in God's timing and trust God's plan. The fourth blue candle challenges us to grow in faithful expectation. As people whose faith often becomes tamed to the miraculous, Advent is a time to remember afresh a God in whom all things are possible through God's love.

Congregation Sings: *One Candle is Lit* (v.4) #128

*Come wander where lion and lamb gently play.
 Where evil is banished and faith takes the day.
 A babe in a manger to fool the world's eyes.
 One candle is lit for God's loving surprise.*

Let Us Pray: Gracious Lord, open our eyes to the wonders you have done, open our ears to the promises you have spoken, and open our hearts that we might become the people you have called us to be. We pray this in the name of Christ, our Lord. Amen.