

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 8, 2024

Luke 3:1-6

Make Ready

Advent just wouldn't be Advent without John the Baptist emerging from the wilderness with the urgent message for all to repent. Now to our modern ears "repent" might conjure images of a street preacher shouting at passers-by. But let's not go there. Rather, hear the word "repent" as it is meant to be heard, as a call to turn back to God.

Yes, John leaves his wandering monastic existence to give us this public service announcement to get back to what really matters — loving as God loves and creating a world where that love is extended to all. John even helps us find our way back to God by giving us a list of things to do.

Another list is probably the last thing we need right now, especially as our Christmas to-do's grow longer each day. There are gifts to buy. Presents to wrap. Cookies to bake. Trees to trim. And, if you are one of the rare saints that still writes Christmas cards rather than sending an e-greeting, then there are cards to address and stamps to lick.

John, though, wants us to make ready for Christmas in ways we might never have thought of before. Echoing the very words of the prophet Isaiah, John invites us to prepare the way for the Lord by adding the following to our holiday lists:

Fill in every valley.

What can we do to reach those who are low and full despair? How can the valleys of poverty of body, mind and soul be filled by us?

Make low the mountains and hills.

What looming mountain or hill of injustice can be lowered so that the playing field for all is finally level?

Straighten crooked roads.

In what way is God asking us to find the courage to speak truth to lies?

Smooth the rough places.

What are the rough places in our own lives that need smoothing out? Does a callus heart need to soften? Does a short temper need more patience?

It is interesting to note that John's appearance in Luke's Gospel starts with an introduction of the rulers and religious authorities who were in power during his life, reminding us that often earthly rulers have their own agendas.

It is only through our hands and hearts that God's beloved community becomes a reality.

After all, if we don't prepare the way for the Lord by filling in valleys, lowering mountains and making smooth rough places, then who will?

Loving God, may our lists of things to do include more than just holiday busy work. May our lists reflect our commitment in creating beloved communities that point to Your glory, now and forever. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



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

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BUL0202





St. John's United Church of Christ
 Second Sunday of Advent
 December 8, 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)

Make ready a pathway for our God.

Clean out the debris in our hearts and our closets.

Clear out a space in our calendars.

Put aside any sense of unworthiness

And focus on the One who comes to love us.

Prepare a place in our homes and hearts.

Set the table and light the candles,

For Christ is coming.

* **OPENING HYMN** *like a child* #133

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

On this Second Sunday of Advent, O Lord, we come to praise your holy name for your unmatched love given to us in Christ. Enable us to humbly receive your grace and dutifully dedicate ourselves to worshipping and serving you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH -Mattingly Family

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE *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)

Open our eyes and ears. Revive the desert places in us that we may yet blossom. Don't let the world be cold or dry. Bring your promises close to it. Freshen it. And let us stand on tiptoes of expectation, daily through Advent, convinced that we will find your footprints on our paths, and that one day soon we will see these gifts blossom as flowers in the desert. Amen.

ANTHEM *Will You Know Him When He Comes*

WE GATHER IN PRAYER

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

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

SCRIPTURE: Old Testament: Malachi 3:1-4

New Testament: Luke 3:1-6

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

MESSAGE *Listening to the Prophets*

* **CLOSING HYMN** *Watcher, Tell Us of us of the Night*
(sung to Come, Ye, Thankful, People Come #718)

* **BLESSING** (responsively)

May the rough places in your life be made smooth. May the valleys of despair be filled with comfort. May the door to your heart be wide open.

May the glory of Emmanuel be with us all our days.

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

* **POSTLUDE**

ST. JOHN'S UCC STAFF and VOLUNTEERS

Pastor	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
Liturgist	John Riggs
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	Brian Fillingim
Church Secretary	Angie Robinson
Church Board President	Jana Vieck
Greeters	Liz Emmons



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 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
Messy Church Meeting 5:15 pm
Christian Education 6 pm

THURSDAY, December 12

Dinner & Conversation 6 pm Café Moonlight

The Blessing Box



What Is The Blessing Box Mission?

Located in St. John's rear parking lot. The Blessing Box contains non-perishable food donations from our church members. These food items are available for any family living in the blocks surrounding our church campus. Residents are able to pick up a few items to help "get them through" until they receive their next check.

How Can I Help?

The Blessing Box relies on the support of individuals from St. John's UCC.

- Non-Perishable Food Donations Are Collected The 1st and 3rd Sundays Of Each Month And Placed In The Designated Shopping Cart In Memorial Hall
- An Extra Donation In Your Pledge Envelope Marked "Blessing Box"
- Cash Donation Dropped Off In The Church Office Marked "Blessing Box"

HOURS OF OPERATION

Open 24 Hours

Contact
Elaine Workman
812-882-2720

LOOKING AHEAD

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



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.
- Rev. Al Willhouse turns 95 next Tuesday (Dec. 10th). He and Leta love hearing from their St. John's friends.
- 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.

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.

****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.**



The flower arrangement is in loving memory of Dannie Roark from Brenda in remembrance of their wedding on December 7, 1974.



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.

NEXT SUNDAY, December 15, the children will present their Christmas program in worship.



THANKS to Jerri Johanningmeier for the Grinch cookies for Children's Mement.

Will Meyer and the Youth Group have decorated a light pole with a nativity scene at Gregg Park. Make sure you drive through and see it! It is located by the pickle ball court by the shelter house.