

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 21, 2025

Matthew 1:18-25

God with Us

It was Christmas Eve, and I was joining my father at a church he had been attending. I settled into the pew, letting the medley of hymns soothe my still frazzled soul from the push to meet holiday deadlines at my Manhattan magazine job. Soon, though, I heard more than the music. I heard a silent prayer fill my heart.

God, thank You for being in my life. May I never forget to thank You even when dark times come. May I always know You are with me.

Why was I thinking about dark times descending upon my seemingly perfect life? I was young. My career was taking off. I had a wonderful apartment. I even had a special someone in my life.

Thankfully, the church school procession of angels with lopsided cardboard wings had begun, giving me something else to focus on. But throughout the service, every now and then, I kept thinking about, "May I never forget to thank You even when dark times come."

Two months later, "the one" I envisioned building a future with was killed in a jeep accident while traveling in Africa. The proverbial rug was ripped out from underneath me. Yet through my tears, I remembered my Christmas prayer. And so, I prayed in my sorrow a prayer of thanks for God being with me here in my dark time.

The year of unwanted change flew by and once again it was Christmas Eve. This time, though, I wasn't sitting in the pew of the church my father was attending. I was standing with a heavenly host of angels with lopsided cardboard wings. I had left my magazine job and was now serving the church as Christian ed director as I prepared to enter seminary. Little did I know then that down this unexpected path was a rural congregation waiting for me where I would find not only my call, but someone to share my life with.

As I waited with the overly excited angels, I thought about how drastically my life had changed. It was then the realization of where God had led me fully hit. I was standing in church named "Emmanuel," which was located on a street named "Hope."

The angels began fluttering as the organ bellowed with the first notes of the processional hymn. But I didn't hear any of it. All I could hear was a familiar prayer, in which I invite you to say along with me:

God, thank You for being in my life. May I never forget to thank You even when dark times come. May I always know You are with me. In the name of Emmanuel, God with us always, we pray. Amen.

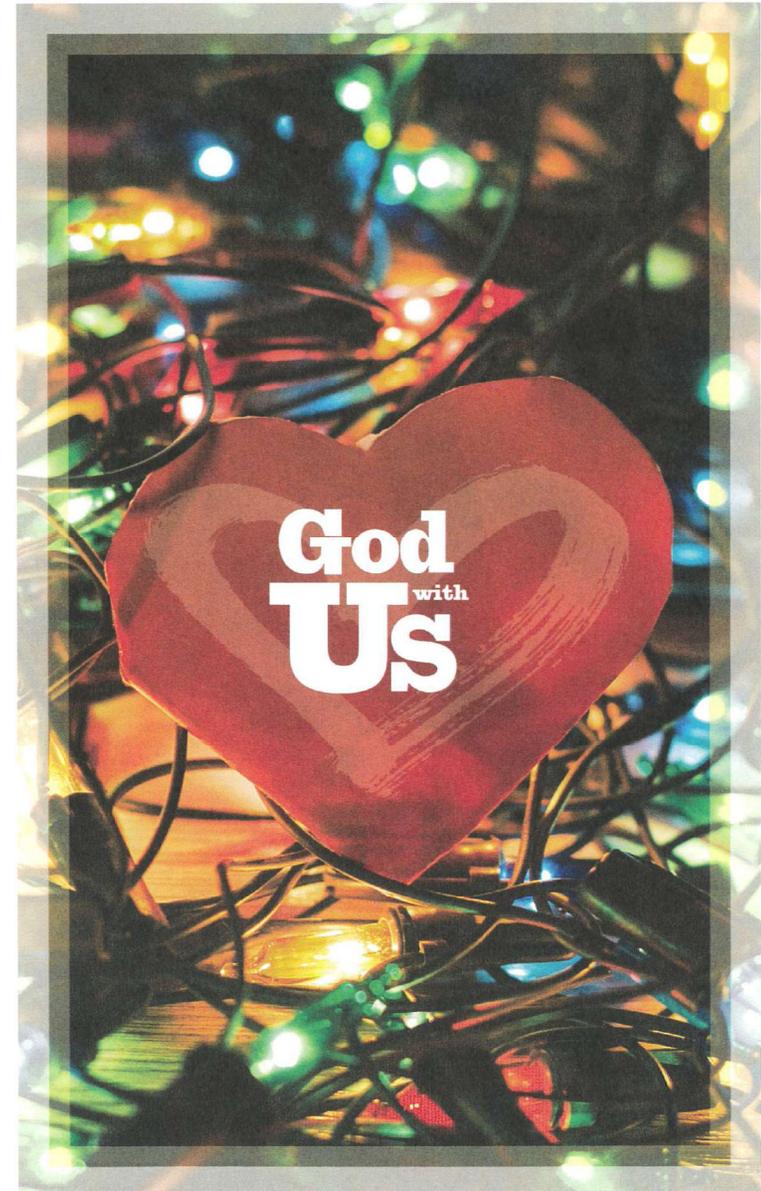
(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's Sunday Bulletin.)



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

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BUL0203





St. John's United Church of Christ
Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21, 2025



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

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, GREET ONE ANOTHER (be seated)

PRELUDE

CHURCH BELL (the bell invites us to worship)

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- Lucas & Calvin Doggett

ANTHEM *Mary Did You Know?* Lowry/Green

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

SCRIPTURE: Old Testament: Isaiah 7:10-16

New Testament: Matthew 1:18-25

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

MESSAGE *A Regular Joe*

***CLOSING HYMN** *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (vs. 1 & 2) #144

***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**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH - *Love*

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.

This Week in the Life of St. John's

Sunday, December 21

Adult FF Class 9:30am
Worship 10:30am
Fellowship Time @ 10am in
Memorial Hall

Tuesday, December 23

Cadette Girl Scouts 4:30-6pm

Thursday, December 25

Merry Christmas

Monday, December 22

BABE Store 12-5:30pm
Friends 5:30-6:15pm

Wednesday, December 24

Christmas Eve Service @ 7pm

Friday, December 26

Pastor Debbie is Off
Office Closed

Looking Ahead In December/January 2026

Sunday, December 28

Adult FF Class 9:30am
Worship 10:30am

Tuesday, December 30

Cadette Girl Scouts 4:30-6pm

Thursday, January 01

Happy New Year

Monday, December 29

BABE Store 12-5:30pm
Friends 5:30-6:15pm

Wednesday, December 31

Friday, January 02

Pastor Debbie is Off



Staff and Volunteers

Pastor:	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
Secretary	Kim Butler
Liturgist:	John Riggs
Head Usher:	Kim Godare
Organist:	DeEtta Welte
Music Director, Pianist:	Becky Brockman
Children & Family Ministry Coordinator:	Will Meyer
Nursery Attendant:	Darcie Bahr
Projection:	Jill Dogett
Sound:	Lonny Vieck
Church Board President:	Ed Cummings

Did You Know?

St. John's Sunday Morning Worship Services are streamed **LIVE** on our church's Facebook page, "**St. John's United Church of Christ Vincennes.**"

Or, you can watch the Worship Service at your convenience by going on the church website, "**myucc.org**" and clicking on "Worship Service" for a particular date.

You can also download a copy of each monthly church newsletter from our church website to keep up with all the activities.

Announcements

** You may place your offerings in the designated basket or online at myucc.org and click on the *contribution* button. Please prayerfully consider setting up regular online donations to continue our outreach into the community.

DINNER & CONVERSATION: We will not be having Dinner & Conversation this week.

NEXT SUNDAY's worship will be a laity led service of Lessons and Carols.

HAT & MITTEN TREE: 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.

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

MESSY CHURCH will be held on January 7th from 5:30-7:00 pm. The theme is *Follow the Star: The Three Kings*. Lots of activities, crafts, dinner and fun! Bring the family and join us.

PASTOR DEBBIE will be on vacation December 26-January 3rd. She will return to the pulpit on January 4th and to the office on January 5th.

MOVIE TODAY at 4:00 p.m. (no dinner served). Join us today at 4:00 for Disney's A Christmas Carol. This movie is family friendly so join us for a fun time. Following the movie, the Youth have invited anyone who wishes to stay for a Taco Bar. See you there!

Prayers and Posts

We ask for continuing prayer requests for: Jessica Connor and family, Gary Meyer, Don Osborne, Jr., Conway Wilson. The Family of Mark Schutter, Jasmine Zeller, Cindy Utley, Marilyn Houchins, Tony Riley and Ellen Riggs. Mollie Joice, cousin of Darcie Bahr and prayers for Bobby Bahr.

Shut-in Addresses:

Susie Milligan - Colonial Assisted Living, Room 118, 1622 S Hart Street Road, Vincennes, IN 47591
Leona Conway - Aperia Care, C Wing Room C-35, 3801 Old Bruceville Road, Vincennes, IN 47591
Marge Beamon - The Villages at Oak Ridge, Room 303, 1694 Troy Road, Washington, IN 47501

At Home:

Gary Meyer
Mike Lankford

Prayer request or updates can now be relayed to the Church Office during regular office hours: Monday-Friday from 9am-1pm. Email: stjohnsuccoffice@gmail.com. Text or call at 812-882-2720.

Prayer request or updates are to be sent to Janet Goodman during the evening and weekends.

Email: terrybaseball@gmail.com. or you can text or call at 812-887-2797