

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 14, 2025

Luke 1:46b-55

Heartbeat of Justice

Mary, a teen engaged to Joseph, received the startling news that God had chosen her to birth hope into a bleak world. Quite an honor of the divine kind, yet quite a dishonor of the humankind. This pregnancy would ignite gossipy whispers and many a raised eyebrow among the villagers. Still, Mary said “yes,” relaying the brave and life-changing words to her angelic messenger: *Let it be according to God’s will.*

While young and innocent, Mary knew what even the most learned and worldly person failed to grasp: The Mighty One can and will do great things for all who have been told that they are not good enough to garner any worthy attention.

The holy mother-to-be also knew there was something greater in the works than her own blissful domesticity with Joseph. Her “yes” would bless generations to come. How often do we realize that our “yes” to God creates a ripple of blessings? When will we ever truly allow God’s plan to override our best laid plans for tomorrow? Can we give up our dreams so easily and so eagerly for that of God’s vision for us?

So in awe to be cast in the salvation story, Mary begins singing of God’s power that sends the rich away empty. While the scholarly name of Mary’s song is “The Magnificat” it could easily be called “The Heartbeat of Justice,” for each word hits the right note of how God will dismantle the systems of oppression.

Mary had her season of saying “yes” to God. Now it is our turn, for we are being invited to play a pivotal role in the unfolding saga of salvation. It is our time to sing “The Heartbeat of Justice,” making clear every note of God’s care for all who have been forgotten.

But what exactly would our “yes” to God require? According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, every “yes” to God is accompanied with a “no.” As the German pastor, theologian and anti-Nazi dissident during World War II once reflected, “Our ‘yes’ to God requires our ‘no’ to all injustice, to all evil, to all lies, to all oppression and violation of the weak and poor.”

“The Heartbeat of Justice” is playing. Who will sing it out loud?

Mighty and loving God, as Christmas songs fill the air with promises of jingling bells and flying reindeer, may our ears be attuned to the true song of Christmas. May we hear the lyrics of a justice seeking Love that sets prisoners free and lifts those kicked to the gutter. May we hear, may we sing, and may we find ourselves whispering our “yes” to You. May Your will be done in our lives. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

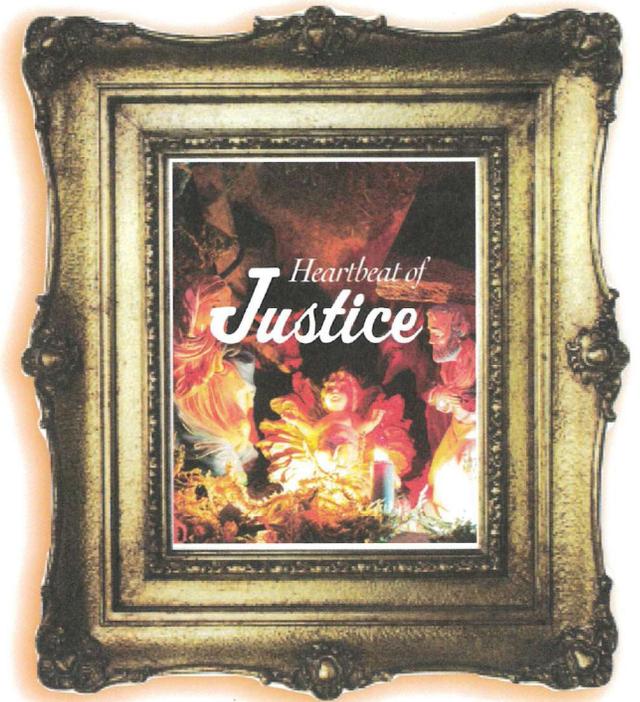
(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today’s Sunday Bulletin.)



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St. John's United Church of Christ
Third Sunday of Advent
December 14, 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)

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 Thou Joyful!* #169

***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

Addison Cummings & Korbin Alexander

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 & YOUTH CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

***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.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH - Joy

Responsive Litany

During Advent we listen for the wonder of God's Word.

Speak to us, O Lord, for our hearts are open.

During Advent we reach beyond the noise and distractions of this world.

Speak to us, O Lord, for our hearts are open.

During Advent we ponder the good news that is our great joy.

Speak to us, O Lord, for our hearts are open.

During Advent we speak words of hope to those engaged in life's struggles.

Speak to us, O Lord, for our hearts are open.

During Advent we offer words of peace to those overcome by life's fears

Speak to us, O Lord, for our hearts are open.

Candle Lighting

Today we light three candles. The first candle (PURPLE) is for Hope. In a world where too often the familiar becomes commonplace, Advent is a time to ponder the mystery of God's amazing love. The second candle (PURPLE) invites us to Prepare for the Peace of God. As we light the third candle, (PINK) for Joy, we affirm that Advent is a time to hear again the still small voice calling us to behold God's promise and embrace the gift of a Savior who is Christ our Lord.

Congregation Sings: *One Candle is Lit* (v.3) #128

Come, festively sing while awaiting the birth,

Join angels in dancing from heaven to earth.

Wave banners of good news, lift high thankful praise.

One candle is lit for the joy of these days.

CLOSING PRAYER

Let Us Pray: **Gracious God, as we continue our Advent journey, we pray that we would be guided by grace, strengthened by faith, and encouraged by Christ. With the many distractions surrounding us daily, keep our eyes focused on your glory and our ears attentive to your Word. We pray this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

Children and Youth Christmas Program

"Let Peace on Earth Ring"

Children - Josie Bahr, Grady Cummins, Avery Sanders, Cora Schlag, Elliott Schotter, & Elyse Schotter

Unison poem: **On a Cold Winter Night**

Individual recitations: **J - E - S - U - S!**

Song: **Bells Are Ringing**

Youth Bell Choir - Korbin Alexander, Charlotte Bahr, Zoey Bahr, Harper Coomes, Rylan Coomes, Addison Cummings, Reid Schotter, & Owen Schotter

Narration

Bell Choir: **O Little Town of Bethlehem**

Narration

Bell Choir: **Silent Night**

Narration

Bell Choir: **Joy to the World**

Narration (Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus appear)

Bell Choir and soloist: **Let There Be Peace on Earth**

All ringers and singers: **We Wish You a Merry Christmas**

Additional Participants: Allison Goodman, Paul Goodman, Crew Goodman, & Jillian Cummins

Many thanks to all of our participants!

Thank you to Becky Brockman on the piano, Lonny Vieck on sound, and to Jerri Johanningsmeier for creating letter signs.

Also, thanks to our adult helpers; Sarah Lowe, Will Meyer, and Jill Lopez.

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: This week's dinner will be at Procopio's at 6:00 pm Thursday night. Please sign the list in the back of the sanctuary so we can reserve a large enough table. This will be our last *get together* until after the New Year

December Youth Dates

12/14 (Sunday) 4pm-5:30pm

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.

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.

FAMILY CHRISTMAS MOVIE is tonight at 5:00 pm in Memorial Hall with a light supper served. The movie will be *Disney's A Christmas Carol* featuring the voices of Jim Carrey, Gary Oldman, Colin Firth, Cary Elwes, Bob Hoskins and Robin Wright. Everyone is invited, but please sign the sheet in back of church if you plan to attend so we can plan the food.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to our amazing Choir Director, Becky Brockman. Best wishes for all the years to come!

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

This Week in the Life of St. John's

Sunday, December 14

Adult FF Class 9:30am
Children's Program and Youth Event
Youth Meeting @ 4-5:30pm
Movie @ 5:00

Tuesday, December 16

Girl Scouts 4:30-6pm

Thursday, December 18

Dinner & Conversation Procopio's @ 6pm

Monday, December 15

BABE Store 12-5:30pm
Friends 5:30-6:15pm
Church Board 7pm
Music and Worship @ 6pm

Wednesday, December 17

Choir Practice @ 7pm
January Newsletter items Due in Office

Friday, December 19

Pastor Debbie is Off

Looking Ahead In December

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



Staff and Volunteers

Pastor:	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
Secretary	Kim Butler
Liturgist:	Youth
Head Usher:	Kim Godare
Organist:	DeEtta Welte
Music Director, Pianist:	Becky Brockman
Children & Family Ministry Coordinator:	Will Meyer
Nursery Attendant:	Darcie Bahr
Projection:	Sandra Lange
Sound:	Jonathan Lange
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.