

# FIRST UNITED CHURCH OF OAK PARK

December 18, 2022

Advent IV – Love



*An open community united in love and justice*

# PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

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PRELUDE

Mark Sudeith

*Prelude on 'Rhosymedre' by Ralph Vaughan Williams*

WELCOME

Alicia Reese

\*CALL TO WORSHIP

The Reed Family

& ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING

Today we add to the candles of hope, peace, and joy.

Today we light also the candle of love,

And remember all the ways that love blesses our lives.

Love among our families,

Love among our church members,

Love that can stretch so wide it can reach even our enemies.

Since love comes from God,

In loving one another we know God.

*Please join us in reading this prayer by Howard Thurman:*

**I will light candles this Christmas,**

**Candles of joy despite all the sadness,**

**Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,**

**Candles of courage for fears ever present,**

**Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,**

**Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,**

**Candles of love to inspire all my living,**

**Candles that will burn all year long.**

\*PASSING THE PEACE

\*OPENING HYMN

Sanctuary Choir  
& Congregation

*O God, Whose Steadfast Love* (Black hymnal no. 426)

**O God, whose steadfast love true motherhood has blessed;**

**who shields the infant small upon its mother's breast:**

**Embrace us, too, O God, our God, and hold us in your loving arms,  
and hold us in your loving arms.**

**Your promises, O God, so sure throughout the years,**

**have lived in mothers' hearts, have bloomed from mothers' tears.**

**So Sarah laughed, and Hannah wept, and singing Mary secrets kept,  
and singing Mary secrets kept.**

**In your great love, O God, full parenthood is known;  
a father mourns his child, a mother's strength is shown.  
Let parents' faithful lives unbind your love that through them we might find  
Christ's deeper love for humankind.**

**May your household of faith one family become,  
That love may be increased and none may be alone;  
That mother's love and father's care and children's joy we all may share,  
And children's joy we all may share.**

### PRAYER FOR WHOLENESS

The Reed Family

We pause now to notice the places in our lives and in our world that feel broken.  
Join us in this prayer for wholeness.

**God of mystery, we are too loud, too busy, and too frantic to recognize you in our  
everyday lives. Be both our great Enigma and our incarnate friend. Quiet us  
enough to know you.**

*Silence is held.*

### ASSURANCE OF LOVE

Beloved of God, remember that the glory of God shone around the shepherds on a  
"normal" night. The angel telling them not to fear spoke in the middle of a regular  
work week. Love comes to us and makes our common lives holy. Thanks be to God  
for this gift of love!

### MUSICAL RESPONSE

*My Lord! What a Morning* (Blue hymnal no. 449, refrain, 2x)

**My Lord! what a morning,  
My Lord! what a morning,  
Oh, my Lord! what a morning,  
When the stars begin to fall,  
When the stars begin to fall.**

## LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD TO US

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## \*HYMN OF ILLUMINATION

*Who Would Think that What Was Needed* (Black hymnal no. 153)

**Who would think that what was needed to transform and save the earth  
might not be a plan or army proud in purpose, proved in worth?  
Who would think, despite derision, that a child should lead the way?  
God surprises earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas Day.**

**Shepherds watch and sages wonder, monarchs scorn and angels sing;  
such a place as none would reckon hosts a holy, helpless thing;  
stabled beasts and passing strangers watch a baby laid in hay:  
God surprises earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas Day.**

**Centuries of skill and science span the past from which we move,  
yet experience questions whether with such progress we improve.  
In our search for sense and meaning, lest our hopes and humor fray,  
God surprises earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas Day.**

SCRIPTURE READING – Luke 1:57-66

The Reed Family

SERMON - SPEECHLESS

Lydia Mulkey

## \*SERMON RESPONSE

*It Came Upon the Midnight Clear* (Blue hymnal no. 38, v. 3)

**And ye, beneath life's crushing load, / Whose forms are bending low,  
Who toil along the climbing way / With painful steps and slow,  
Look now! for glad and golden hours / Come swiftly on the wing:  
O rest beside the weary road, / And hear the angels sing.**

## RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

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CALL TO THE OFFERING

Pauline Coffman

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday collected on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday for NESSL

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

*He Will Come* by Mark Bell

He will come when we're least expecting him,  
when the world is unprepared,

Sanctuary Choir,  
Carl Nauert, clarinet  
Mark Sudeith, organ

as if orphaned from its destiny,  
as if no creator cared.

Refrain: Though for us, it's out of season,  
God decides the place and time.

He will come when we're least expecting him,  
when agendas have been set,  
and the deadlines have been finalized  
through which needs are seldom met. R/

He will come when we're least expecting him,  
not to parliament or queen,  
nor to capitol or capital,  
blessing what has always been. R/

He will come when we're least expecting him,  
as a baby at the breast,  
with agnostics in the dining room,  
in the answer no one guessed. R/

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER

John Edgerton

**Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors**

**and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil,  
for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever.**

**Amen.**

## GOING FORTH IN DEDICATION AND SERVICE

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\*CLOSING HYMN

Sanctuary Choir  
& Congregation

*Isaiah the Prophet Has Written of Old*  
(Black hymnal no. 108)

**Isaiah the prophet has written of old  
how God's new creation shall come.**

**Instead of the thorn tree, the fir tree shall grow;**

**the wolf shall lie down with the lamb, the lamb,  
The wolf shall lie down with the lamb.**

**The mountains and hills shall break forth into song,  
The peoples be led forth in peace;  
The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God  
as the waters cover the sea, the sea,  
As the waters cover the sea.**

**Yet nations still prey on the meek of the world,  
and conflict turns parent from child.  
Your people despoil all the sweetness of earth;  
the brier and the thorn tree grow wild, grow wild,  
the brier and the thorn tree grow wild.**

**God, bring to fruition your will for the earth,  
that no one shall hurt or destroy,  
That wisdom and justice shall reign in the land  
and your people shall go forth in joy, in joy,  
your people shall go forth in joy.**

**\*BLESSING**

Lydia Mulkey

**\*BENEDICTION RESPONSE**

*My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout (v. 1)*

**My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the God of my heart is great,  
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things that you bring to the ones who wait.  
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight, and my weakness you did not  
spurn,  
so from east to west shall my name be blest. Could the world be about to turn?**

**POSTLUDE**

Mark Sudeith

*Fantasia on 'Veni Emmanuel' by Alec Rowley*

*The Deacons are available after worship in the Chapel for a time of private  
prayer and conversation.*

# EVENTS AND UPDATES

*Below is just a sampling of the news and events at First United. Follow us on Facebook ([facebook.com/firstunitedoakpark](https://facebook.com/firstunitedoakpark)) where we share our weekly newsletter and lots more!*

## CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP, DECEMBER 24 AT 5 AND 8 P.M.

Christmas Eve is a wonderful time at First United! The 5 p.m. service is great for families, with familiar carols and the annual Christmas Pageant. Or join us at 8 p.m. for a traditional service of lessons and carols with lots of music and candlelight.

## CHRISTMAS DAY CAROL SING, DECEMBER 25 AT 11 A.M.

Christmas Day worship will be a relaxed opportunity to gather and sing the Christmas hymns that we all love. We will meet in the Sanctuary, but will not have a formal service or message.

## CHRISTMAS CLOSURE DECEMBER 26 THROUGH JANUARY 1

First United will be closed December 26 through January 1 for a winter break. Worship on January 1 will be on YouTube only. The office will reopen on January 2 and we'll worship together in person for Epiphany on January 8.

## CHURCH SCHOOL CHRISTMAS RECESS

Church School will not meet on December 25 and January 1. If your family is traveling during your school breaks, we wish you safe travels. We can't wait to see everyone back on January 8!

## NEW BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP FORMING IN JANUARY

A new Bible discussion group will come to life at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday, January 8. And it will reconvene weekly in the conference room along the northeast corner of the lounge. Until then, Kathryn Heavey ([kathrynop@gmail.com](mailto:kathrynop@gmail.com)) or Dale Sorenson ([mrdsoren@gmail.com](mailto:mrdsoren@gmail.com)) will answer your questions.

## FUSH RETREAT REGISTRATION DUE JANUARY 6

Registration is now open for the FUSH (First United Senior High) winter retreat at Pilgrim Park, January 21-23. The cost is \$175 per youth and the registration is due by January 6. Reach out to Alicia Reese ([areese@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:areese@firstunitedoakpark.com)) for more information.

# WELCOME TO FIRST UNITED!

We are a union church of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ. We seek to be an inclusive expression of Christ's body celebrating our diversity while finding our unity in Christ. We are a More Light/Open and Affirming congregation, committed to full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in membership & ministry.

## ADULT EDUCATION

Faith formation doesn't end after Church School. Adult Education takes a variety of forms, from small, group Bible studies to Sunday morning speaker series. Watch the Thursday Eblast for the latest offerings.

## CHILDREN IN WORSHIP & OUR NURSERY

We love to have children in worship! Age-appropriate worship activities and books are available as you enter the sanctuary. We also offer safe, quality childcare and quiet play for children five and under in our nursery. Ask an usher for directions.

## CHURCH SCHOOL

Church School is for children ages birth through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Meeting Sundays at 9:45 a.m., we tell stories of the Bible using a lens of love and justice with singing, praying, and creating. Contact the office ([office@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:office@firstunitedoakpark.com)) to learn more.

## MUSIC MINISTRIES

We hope you enjoy the music of our Sanctuary Choir and soloists in worship. COVID-19 has altered the way we do music, but music remains deeply important to our worship experience. For more information contact Bill Chin ([bill@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:bill@firstunitedoakpark.com)).

## YOUTH PROGRAMS – FUJI (JR. HIGH) & FUSH (SR. HIGH)

The youth groups meet on Sunday evenings from 5 – 6:30 pm here at the church. Contact Alicia Reese ([areese@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:areese@firstunitedoakpark.com)) for more information.



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