



Welcome

ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR

**Sunday,
December 17,
2023**

10:00 AM

**Third Sunday of
Advent**





Welcome to Worship!

SUNDAYS @ 10:00AM

In-person Worship. Masks and distance recommended, not required

Livestream on YouTube. Live at 10am then available on our channel

"The Redheaded Preacher" Podcast. Available wherever you get your podcasts, includes sermon and scriptures only, posted weekly by Tuesday



Ways to Give

Text Your Gift. Text your gift to [844-977-2346](tel:844-977-2346)

After a short set-up the first time, simply text your gift amount

Use PayPal. [PayPal.me/stpeteruccskokie](https://www.paypal.com/merchot/display?host=stpeteruccskokie)

Send a Check. Mail to the address below ... this way still works fine

Set up Vanco. Contact the church office to enroll in regular giving



Open Communion

All Christians and seekers after God are invited to partake of the Lord's Supper with us the **first Sunday of every month** and special Holy Days (Christmas, Maundy Thursday, and Easter). **At-home Communion** participants are invited to provide their own elements and join when Pastor bids you, "take, eat, and drink."



About St. Peter's UCC

We've been in the heart of downtown Skokie since 1867. We are a part of the United Church of Christ, which means we are passionate about our faith and open in our thinking. We believe in a Triune God who **loves everyone**, regardless of gender identity, orientation, race, status, or physical or mental ability, and we **joyously welcome all people** to share worship, membership, marriage, baptism, funeral, and fellowship with us.



Contact, Follow, or Talk to Us

Rev. Richard Lanford (Pastor): revlanford@gmail.com

In the office Wed-Sat (times vary) and Sundays

Laura Olson (Office Manager): office@stpeteruccskokie.org

Office hours Mon-Fri 9am to 2pm

Ben Westphal (Music Director): bcwestphal@gmail.com

Facebook/Instagram/YouTube: [stpeteruccskokie](https://www.facebook.com/stpeteruccskokie)

Website: www.stpeteruccskokie.org

Like, follow, or join our email list for up-to-date info about events and activities!



8013 Laramie Avenue, Skokie, IL 60077 | 847-673-8166

**St. Peter's United Church of Christ in Skokie
Order of Worship for
Sunday, December 17, 2023 at 10:00am
Third Sunday of Advent**

Welcome to worship. The music before the service is intended as a time of silent prayer and preparation.

PRELUDE "Variations on Helmsley"

THE RINGING OF THE BELLS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Peggy Reins

Will those who are able please stand up

CALL TO WORSHIP

P: God has shown love among us

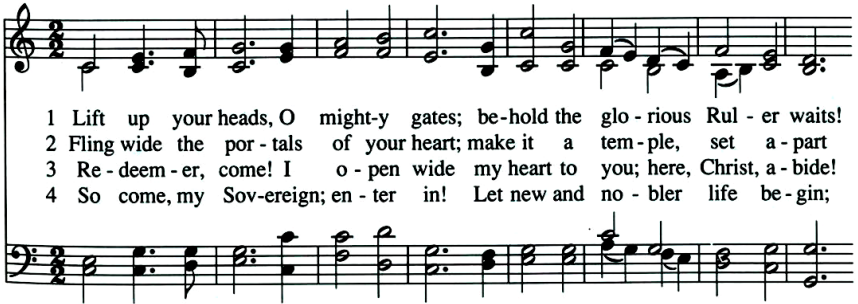
**C: By coming into the world in Jesus,
That all people might live.**

P: My friends, if God has so loved us,
We also ought to love one another,

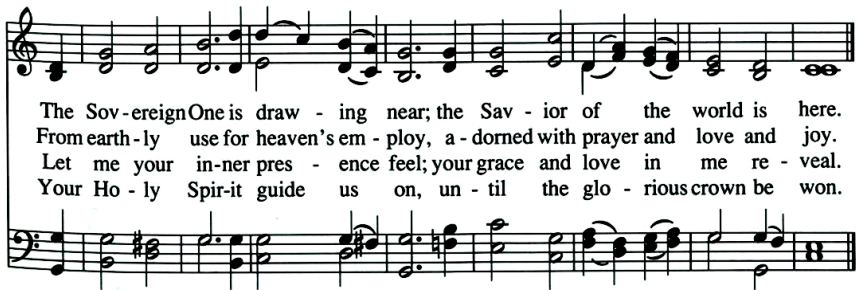
C: For if we love one another, God dwells in us.

**A: Let us worship the Holy One and seek to love as we
have been loved!**

OPENING RESPONSE “Lift Up Your Heads” SSB #9 (v.3)



1 Lift up your heads, O might-y gates; be-hold the glo - rious Rul - er waits!
 2 Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; make it a tem - ple, set a - part
 3 Re - deem - er, come! I o - pen wide my heart to you; here, Christ, a - bide!
 4 So come, my Sov - ereign; en - ter in! Let new and no - bler life be - gin;



The Sov - eign One is draw - ing near; the Sav - ior of the world is here.
 From earth - ly use for heaven's em - ploy, a - dorned with prayer and love and joy.
 Let me your in - ner pres - ence feel; your grace and love in me re - veal.
 Your Ho - ly Spir - it guide us on, un - til the glo - rious crown be won.

CALL TO CONFESSION *Isaiah 59:1,2*

P: “Behold, God’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,

C: **Nor God’s ear dull, that it cannot hear;**

P: But our sins have created a separation between us and our God, and our sins have hidden God’s face from us.”

A: **Let the Church confess its failures, after reading our prayer of confession silently first.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

A: The waiting is long, O God. We want to sing those familiar hymns and carols and be in Christmas spirit immediately. We do not want the discipline of patience and expectation that builds to Christmas Eve and Day. Create in us an active waiting that is faithful to the pathway leading to a stable. Quiet us. Calm us. Help us give up control. In the name of the coming Christ we ask this mercy. Amen.

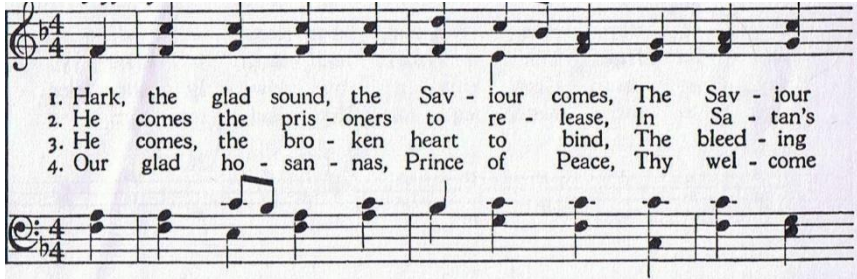
ASSURANCE OF PARDON *Isaiah 61:10*

P: “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for God has clothed me with the garments of salvation, and covered me with the robe of righteousness.”

The prophet lets us know that lovers of God will know God’s forgiveness, God’s salvation, and the gift of righteousness before God which is a gift beyond mere forgiveness! Not that we’ve earned it or because of who we are, but because of who God is: a God of grace and transformation, power and mercy. We see this God most clearly in Jesus, whose birth we are soon to celebrate. Church, please join me in praising God for God’s love, and for clothing us in garments of salvation and covering us in God’s righteousness:

All: Thanks be to God for God’s spectacular, amazing love! Alleluia! Amen.

HYMN "Hark, the Glad Sound, the Savior Comes" #97



1. Hark, the glad sound, the Sav - iour comes, The Sav - iour
 2. He comes the pris - oners to re - lease, In Sa - tan's
 3. He comes, the bro - ken heart to bind, The bleed - ing
 4. Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of Peace, Thy wel - come



prom - ised long: Let ev - ery heart pre - pare a throne, And
 bond - age held: The gates of brass be - fore Him burst, The
 soul to cure, And would with treas - ures of His grace En -
 shall pro - claim; And heaven's e - ter - nal arch - es ring With



ev - ery voice a song, . . . And ev - ery voice a song.
 i - ron fet - ters yield, . . . The i - ron fet - ters yield.
 rich the hum - ble poor, . . . En - rich the hum - ble poor.
 Thy be - lov - èd name, . . . With Thy be - lov - èd name. A-MEN.

The congregation may be seated

LIGHTING THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE

Lighting the Candle of Love this morning and sharing some thoughts on what love means to her is Jennifer Schneider.

RESPONSE: "Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah" (v. 3)

Light three can-dles to watch for Mes-si-ah let the light ban-ish dark-ness.

5

Lift your heads and lift high the gate way for the King of glo-ry

The congregation may be seated

MISSION MOMENT

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Jenn Schneider

From the Prophets:

Isaiah 61:1 – 4, 8-11

Epistle:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

CHORAL ANTHEM "A Shoot Shall Come Forth"

GOSPEL

John 1:6 – 8, 19 - 28

RESPONSE

"Alleluia"

#495

PASTORAL PRAYER AND SILENT PRAYERS

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**A: 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, and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen**

THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY

Will those who are able please stand up

RESPONSE

“We are an Offering”

SSB #11

We lift our voi - ces, — we lift our hands, — we lift our
 lives — up to You, we are an of - fer - ing; — Lord, use our
 voi - ces, — Lord, use our hands, — Lord, use our
 lives, — they are Yours, we are an of - fer - ing. —
 All that we have, — all that we are, —
 all that we hope to be we give to You, we
 give to You. — We lift our
 voi - ces, — we lift our hands, — we lift our
 lives — up to You, we are an of - fer - ing, — we are an of - fer - ing. —

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

A: In our unworthiness, O God, may we yet bring worthy gifts to honor the Messiah. May the brokenhearted be led to enriching new celebrations. May the lowly among us come to know their true worth as persons chosen by You to do great things. By Your mercy, may the hungry be fed not only with bread but also with opportunities to feed others. We give ourselves as Your servants, for no gift is complete without personal commitment. Thank you, God, for expecting great things from us. Our spirits rejoice in the coming of our Savior, in whose name we pray. Amen.

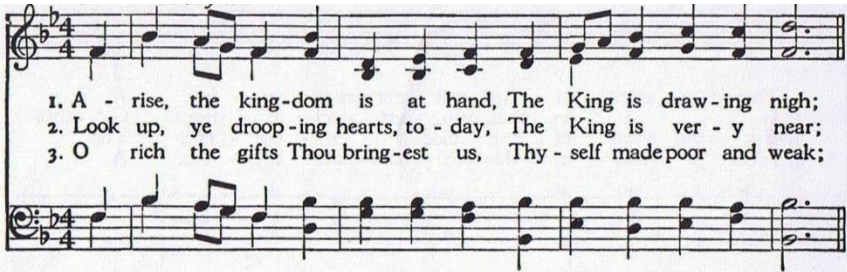
The congregation may be seated

SERMON “To Be and Bear Witness”

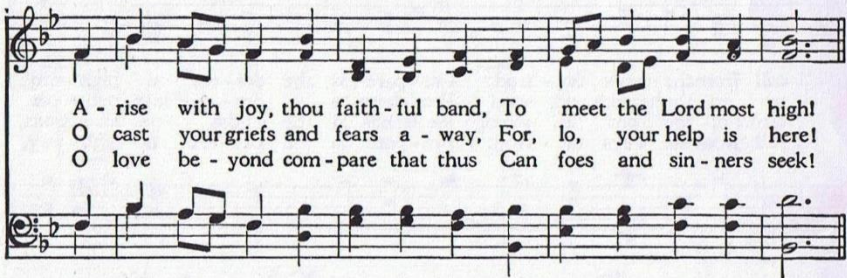
Will those who are able please stand up

HYMN "Arise, the Kingdom is at Hand"

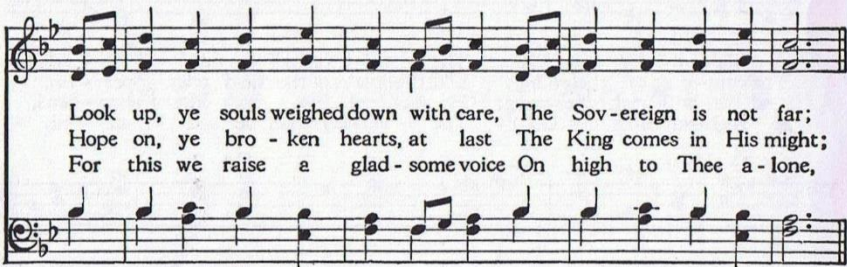
#93



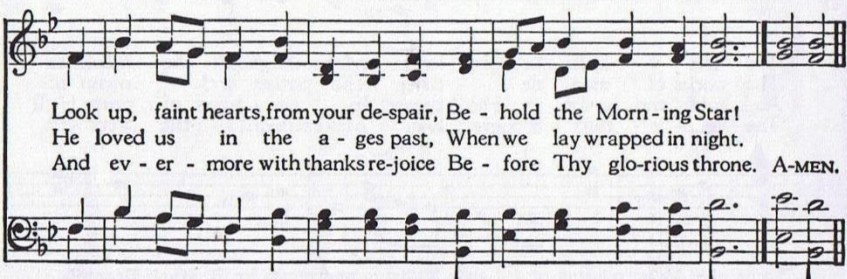
1. A - rise, the king-dom is at hand, The King is draw-ing nigh;
 2. Look up, ye droop-ing hearts, to - day, The King is ver - y near;
 3. O rich the gifts Thou bring-est us, Thy - self made poor and weak;



A - rise with joy, thou faith - ful band, To meet the Lord most high!
 O cast your griefs and fears a - way, For, lo, your help is here!
 O love be - yond com - pare that thus Can foes and sin - ners seek!



Look up, ye souls weighed down with care, The Sov-ereign is not far;
 Hope on, ye bro - ken hearts, at last The King comes in His might;
 For this we raise a glad - some voice On high to Thee a - lone,



Look up, faint hearts, from your de-spair, Be - hold the Morn - ing Star!
 He loved us in the a - ges past, When we lay wrapped in night.
 And ev - er - more with thanks re-joyce Be - fore Thy glo-rious throne. A-MEN.

CHARGE *from 1 Thessalonians 5*

P: Rejoice always, pray without ceasing,
give thanks in all circumstances;

C: Do not quench the Spirit.

Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything;

P: hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

BENEDICTION

P: May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely;
and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound
and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

ADVENT DOXOLOGY *(Sung)***Advent Doxology**

(Once in Royal David's City)

R. G. Huff

IRBY

Henry J. Gauntlett

Unison

Praise to God, the One who made us. Praise to Christ, the soon - born Son.
the new* - born

Praise the Spir - it, ev - er with us. Praise the God - head, Three in One.

Clear a path! Pre-prepare the way! Ad - vent leads to Christ - mas Day!

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POSTLUDE “Nun Komm der Heiden Heiland”

The music after the service is intended as a time of reflection. Pastor will be pleased to greet you at the Sanctuary doors as soon as the postlude has concluded, and our livestream has stopped.

FOR WORSHIP TODAY

MINISTER	Rev. Richard Lanford
MUSIC DIRECTOR	Ben Westphal
DEACON	Maria Altmayer
LIVESTREAM RECORDING	Peter Svenson
NURSERY ATTENDANT	Annie Noorts

News in the Pews

Welcome to what some branches of the Christian church call *Gaudete*, or Rejoice, Sunday. May we find joy in worshiping God and anticipating the celebration of Christ's birth.

Thanks to everyone who served in the several ministries of the church this morning – ministries of worship, education, hospitality, administration and more!

In case you missed worship this month, we have returned at long last to passing and receiving the Offering plates as part of worship.

Pastor Richard will be looking for persons to read Scriptures on Christmas Eve, so don't wait long to let him know if you are interested and available to read at our 7:00 PM service!

As the December Announcer tells us, Christmas Eve this year is also the Fourth Sunday of Advent, which service will be 10 AM Sunday, December 24th. Christmas Eve evening worship on Sunday the 24th will be at 7:00 PM with a Choral Anthem, the Lord's Supper, lessons, carols, a homily and closing candlelight. There is no service on Christmas Day, and a lay-participant service without Pastor Richard will be held at 10 AM on Sunday, December 31st!

The Nominating Committee is at work asking members to consider staying on a Board, or coming onto a Board, or becoming an Officer of the Church. Please do pray about the

request; there is a reason you were thought of to approach. It is always an honor to serve God in these ways, and we do need folks to help carry on the labors the Church!

The deadline for articles for the January 2023 Announcer is tomorrow! Monday, December 18th!

Dec. 30th at 11:30 AM join us to serve at A Just Harvest kitchen! Please let Chad know if you can come serve, and donations for our cost of the meal can be put in the offering plate, brought to the office or mailed in.

The Sunday School Advent Mission Project once again is asking folks to buy and bring to church specific needs for newborns and their moms, starting December 3rd. Items needed are: Baby food, formula, lotion, shampoo, Cheerios, diapers, fruit cups, fruit snacks, juice/milk boxes, pudding cups, wipes. No clothes or blankets. The donations may be placed under the Christmas tree. We will end collection at the end of December.

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Our People

Celebrating birthdays this week are former Sunday School students here, Calder and Cordelia (Cordy) Lundeen. Blessings to them both!

According to the schedule, next Sunday's lector will be Beth Lanford and Heidi will attend the Nursery.

In Sympathy – Dorothy Panzke's sister Barbara passed away last week in hospice in Florida.

We will be holding a special service in two weeks (December 31st, 10 AM), a sermon-free Sunday morning celebration of Jesus' birth through singing, readings of Scripture and from other thoughtful, uplifting sources, and prayers. We might also include reflections on the changing of the calendar year to 2024. Anyone interested in helping make this happen, please talk to Ben or Pastor as soon as you can! Thank you!

In a week and a few days, the Office will be closed as both Pastor and Laura take their remaining vacation days. The Office is closed on Monday, December 25th. Laura will be in on Tuesday, December 26th but be out from the 27th through the 29th.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

PRESIDENT	Peggy Reins
VICE-PRESIDENT	Beth Lanford
TREASURER	Chad McCoy
SECRETARY	Annie Noorts
FINANCIAL SECRETARY	Maria Altmayer

Regular Reminders!

We are always grateful for any and all offerings to the church. No amount is too small! See inside the bulletin's front cover for details on how to donate.

Let us know you were here! Please sign the attendance sheet in the black pew pads and when you think your pew is ready, please pass the pad towards the center aisle of the church.

Pastor's podcast is available wherever you listen to podcasts! Just type in "The Redheaded Preacher" and you'll find us!



MISSION MOMENTS

December 17, 2023

Third Sunday of Advent

Psalm 126

Shouts of Joy

This is the third Sunday of Advent, the season when we set time aside to express the human longing for God to be right here with us. There are many moods in this season. Some of us are too busy and some of us are too lonely. Some of us take joy in all that there is, some of us grieve all that is lost. Some of us find comfort in the same story told a new way each year, some of us just want to hurry along to the turning of the year. Some of us find deep peace in the rituals of this season, and some of us feel very anxious. And many of us feel all these things! On each of our Advent Sundays, we are invited to sink deeply into our spiritual lives with a time of devotion and contemplation, knowing that God meets us exactly where we are - busy and lonely, joyful and grieving, comfortable and hurried, peaceful and anxious.

1When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

2Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
‘The LORD has done great things for them.’

3The LORD has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

First, read the focus scripture for this day.

Read it again, more slowly, perhaps even out loud.

Now read it a third time.

What are the questions or images that come to mind?

Here are some to get you started. You may have others.

In the first week of Advent, we searched for a God who seemed to be lost. In the second week, we took comfort in finding our way to God at last. Now, in the third week, we lift up our voices in praise. What is your favorite way to express praise to God? Do you praise in quiet prayer or in direct action? Alone or with a group? Does your praise flow silently or through song and word?

How much time each week does your faith community spend in praising God? Do you express praise in worship? In meetings? In emails or newsletters? Do you believe that your faith community should spend more or less time in praising God?

End your time of meditation with this prayer: I praise you, Holy One. And as I do, I breathe in your goodness. We praise you, Holy One. And as we do, we rejoice in all the ways you have been gracious to our community. In your amazing name we pray. Amen.

Isaiah 61:1 – 4, 8-11

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,

the devastations of many generations.

For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing;

I will faithfully give them their recompense,

and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Their descendants shall be known among the nations,

and their offspring among the peoples;

all who see them shall acknowledge

that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing,

give thanks in all circumstances;

for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Do not quench the Spirit.

Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything;

hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

John 1:6 – 8, 19 - 28

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” ²¹And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” ²²Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” ²³He said,

“I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,

‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” ²⁶John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.