



# Welcome

ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR

**Sunday,  
December 10,  
2023**

**10:00 AM**

---

**Second 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/merchpot/display?var=me_uatp)

**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](mailto:revlanford@gmail.com)

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

**Laura Olson (Office Manager):** [office@stpeteruccskokie.org](mailto:office@stpeteruccskokie.org)

Office hours Mon-Fri 9am to 2pm

**Ben Westphal (Music Director):** [bcwestphal@gmail.com](mailto:bcwestphal@gmail.com)

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

**Website:** [www.stpeteruccskokie.org](http://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 10, 2023 at 10:00am  
Second Sunday of Advent**

---

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

**PRELUDE**      “Comfort, Comfort Ye My People”  
arr. Matin

**THE RINGING OF THE BELLS**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**      Peggy Reins

*Will those who are able please stand up*

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

P: The day of God is coming; lift up your voices!  
Cry out with the strength God provides.

**C: We await God's coming with anticipation.  
We seek the peace and patience God provides.**


P: Comfort, comfort my people, says our God.  
Speak tenderly to my suffering people.

**C: We will prepare the way for the One who is coming.  
We look forward to baptism in the Spirit!**

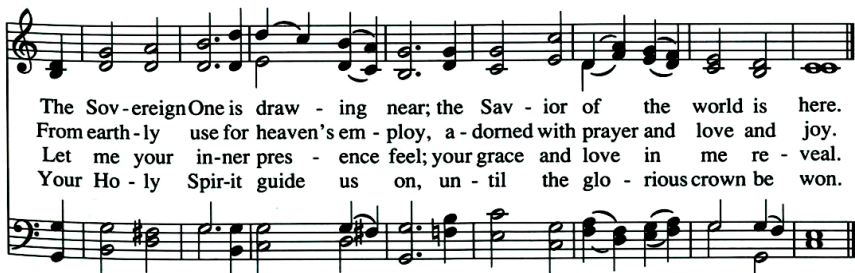
P: God will feed us like a shepherd.  
God will gather us in gentle, caring arms.

**C: God's hand is upon us in blessing;  
We are welcomed by God's steadfast love!**

## OPENING RESPONSE “Lift Up Your Heads” SSB #9 (v.2)



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 - ereign 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

**P:** God is patient with us, not wanting any to perish, yet we have turned away from holiness and godliness.

**C:** We have chosen to fit into society rather than give leadership for a new day.

**A:** Let the Church confess its failures.

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**P:** God of glory, we confess that we have not often recognized You in our midst nor listened for Your voice. Our faith can be fragile, and our iniquity goes unrecognized amid our massive self-concern.

**C:** We have lived as if we have no need to account for the life we have been given. Our church is sometimes

**more focused on our own survival than on its mission in the world.**

P: We come to You today with sincere repentance for our neglect. We have failed to prepare the way for Christ's entry into our everyday environment.

**A: Pardon and change us, we pray; in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *Micah 7:18,19*

P: "Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of Your possession? God does not retain anger forever, because God delights in clemency. He will again have compassion upon us; God will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."

Indeed, who is a God like the God we know in Jesus Christ? Undeserving as we are, forgetful, sometimes unfaithful, sometimes choosing not to love when love was called for, God nevertheless gave us Jesus to be for us the Way back to mercy and unfettered fellowship with the Creator and Savior of the world! By Christ's death and resurrection for us, we are forgiven, and the Spirit comes to bring unconquerable new life within and among us. Can we stay silent about this? Join me please in words of praise, saying . . .

**All: Alleluia! Amen!**

## HYMN

## "People, Look East"

## SSB #36

1. Peo - ple, look east, the time is near of the  
 2. Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more  
 3. Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim, one more  
 4. An - gels an - nounce with shouts of mirth him who

crown - ing of the year. Make your house fair as you are  
 seed is plant - ed there. Give up your strength the seed to  
 light the bowl shall brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y  
 brings new life to earth. Set ev - ery peak and val - ley

a - ble, trim the hearth and set the ta - ble.  
 nour - ish, that in course the flower may flour - ish.  
 weath - er, bright as sun and moon to - geth - er.  
 hum - ming with the word, the Lord is com - ing.

Peo - ple, look east and sing to - day:  
 Peo - ple, look east: Love, the Guest, is on the way.  
 Love, the Rose, is on the way.  
 Peo - ple, look east: Love, the Star, is on the way.  
 Love, the Lord, is on the way.

*The congregation may be seated*

### LIGHTING THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE

*Lighting the Candle of Peace this morning and sharing some thoughts on what hope means to her is Rita McMahon.*

### RESPONSE: "Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah" (v. 2)

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

5

He shall feed His flock like a Shep herd, gent - ly lead them home - ward

*The congregation may be seated*

### MISSION MOMENT

#### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Peter Svenson

From the Prophets:

Isaiah 40:1-11

Epistle:

2nd Peter 3:8-15a

### MUSICAL MEDIATION "Comfort, Comfort Ye My People"

Traditional

### GOSPEL

Mark 1: 1-8

### 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**

**OFFERTORY**

*Will those who are able please stand up*

**DOXOLOGY**

#551

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**A: Loving God, since we know that You love a cheerful giver, we offer these gifts to You with joy. Fill us with gladness as we celebrate all of the grace that we have received through Jesus Christ, including that which we will celebrate soon enough in His birth. May our gifts build up Your church and testify to the world of Your love. In Jesus' name. Amen.**

*The congregation may be seated*

**SERMON** "Under Construction"



Will those who are able please stand up

**HYMN "There's a Voice in the Wilderness Crying" #94**

1. There's a voice in the wil - der - ness cry - ing, A  
 2. O Zi - on, that bring - est good ti - dings, A Get thee  
 3. But the word of our God en - dur - eth, The  
 4. There's a voice in the wil - der - ness cry - ing, A

call from the ways un - trod: Pre - pare in the des - ert a high - way,  
 up to the heights and sing! Pro - claim to a des - o - late peo - ple  
 arm of the Lord is strong; He stands in the midst of na - tions,  
 call from the ways un - trod; Pre - pare in the des - ert a high - way,

A high - way for our God! The val - leys shall be ex - alt - ed,  
 The com - ing of their King: Like the flow'rs of the field they per - ish,  
 And He will right the wrong: He shall feed His flock like a shep - herd,  
 A high - way for our God! The val - leys shall be ex - alt - ed,

The loft - y hills brought low; Make straight all the crook - ed  
 The works of men de - cay, The power and pomp of  
 And fold the lambs to His breast; In pas - tures of peace He'll  
 The loft - y hills brought low; Make straight all the crook - ed

pla - ces, Where the Lord our . . God may go!  
 na - tions, Shall pass like a dream a - way.  
 lead them, And give to the wea - ry rest.  
 pla - ces, Where the Lord our . . God may go! A - MEN.

---

## CHARGE & BENEDICTION

P: We have heard about the Lord's ways. We are aware of the habits that lead to life. As you and I go forth from this place in the holiday atmosphere, may we faithfully walk in God's ways, journeying the path paved for each one of us,

**C: Embodying the love, grace, and actions that lead to life, thereby receiving blessings and giving them, too.  
Thanks be to God!**

**A: Amen!**

**POSTLUDE** "Comfort Ye My People" arr. Callahan

*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               | Peter Svenson        |
| LIVESTREAM RECORDING | Jenn Schneider       |
| NURSERY ATTENDANT    | Laurie Mitchell      |

---

---

# News in the Pews

---

**The prophet Isaiah and John the Baptist call through the ages: “Prepare the way of the Lord!” This second Sunday of Advent we gather to do just that. Welcome.**

**There will be a Coffee Hour worship today! It’s hosted by our Board for Christian Education. Please plan to stay!**

**Thank you to all who baked, bought, donated, and helped bag-n-tag cookies for the Night Ministry, the total # of baggies of cookies was 503 (126 dozen), there were 45 scarves, 44 hats, 12 cans of various sizes of cocoa mix, and more, including a box of water bottles filled with 1 toothbrush, 1 toothpaste, 1 towel and 1 pc of candy in each. Thank you everybody for bringing these gifts in!!**

**Thanks to Rich and Jenn Schneider, and everyone else who worked at it, came out in support of, or otherwise assisted at last Sunday’s Lakeside Flutes Holiday musical and the great Jingle Mingle that followed! You missed a fine event if you were not able to be here.**

**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 last Sunday, we have returned at long last to passing and receiving the Offering plates as part of worship.**

---

---

**Dec. 30<sup>th</sup> 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.

**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!

**The Women's Guild meets** this Wednesday at 11:30 AM.

**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!

**Please donate to the Holiday Meals program at the Jewel at Village Crossing Shopping Center in Niles.** We provide a full holiday dinner for needy 4-6 people for Christmas. All you must do is donate at the register to their holiday meal program.

**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.

---

---

**The deadline for articles for the January 2023 Announcer is a week from Monday, December 18th!**

---

## Our People

---

**Winter is coming!** It's a good time to buy a plot at our St. Peter's U.C.C. Cemetery. See Kathy Zipperer to get the ball rolling.

**Happy birthday!** Celebrating birthdays this week are Erik Christianson and Judy Paige. Blessings to you both!

**Hospitalized:** Jim Todd was hospitalized last week; he is now home.

**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 Nominating Committee meets this Wednesday the 13th at 7 PM over Zoom.

**The Church Council meets next Sunday,** so if you are responsible for a report, please submit it to the Council December Dropbox as early as you can this week, giving the others time to read the reports before the meeting after worship on the 17th.

**According to the schedule,** next Sunday's lector will be Jenn Schneider and Annie will attend the Nursery.

**Also, according to the schedule, the Lector spot for Sunday, December 24th (the 4th Sunday of Advent) is open.** Volunteers?

---

---

**We will be holding a special service in three 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!

Today's Call to Worship, Call to Confession and Prayer of Confession are reprinted of United Church Press from *Led by Love*, by Lavon Bayler. Copyright 1996 by The United Church Press.

---

**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!

---



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

## MISSION MOMENTS

---

**December 10, 2023**

**Second Sunday of Advent**

**Isaiah 40:1-11**

**Messengers of Hope**

This is the second 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.

Comfort, comfort O my people, says your God. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Isaiah 40:1, 3-4

---

---

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.

Last week, we sat with the Israelite people in the discomfort that comes from feeling far from God. Today, we take comfort in the now, and in God's presence with us. When have you felt truly comforted by God or God's presence? Compare this to other times you felt God with you. How was that feeling of comfort unique?

These words are often sung as part of Christmas cantatas or presentations. Do these words bring to mind a tune for you? If not, what other songs of Christmas can you bring to mind? Why is it important to invoke God's presence with song at this time of year?

In this scripture, A Voice calls for all of us to make ready for God to come. The scripture advises the listener to make a path where no path has been made before and where there are rough places, to make them smooth. Is there a place in your spiritual life where you have not ventured before? What would it be like to make a new path through that uncharted territory? Or, alternatively, is there a rough place in your life? A meanness, an addiction, an old hurt? What would it be like to begin to smooth out that part of your heart or mind?

End your time of meditation with this prayer: Comforting One, wrap us in your compassion and warmth. Cover us now and always with the certainty of your healing presence. In your Holy Name we pray. Amen.

---



*As scholars name the sections of this long book of Isaiah, chapters 40 through 55 have been called “Second Isaiah,” and, “The Book of the Consolation of Israel.” This reading begins it. Israel has been in exile in Babylon. The prophet is called to announce God’s coming.*

**ISAIAH 40:1-11**

<sup>1</sup> Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

<sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the LORD’S hand  
double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries out:  
“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

<sup>5</sup> Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, “Cry out!”  
And I said, “What shall I cry?”  
All people are grass,

their constancy is like the flower of the field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;  
surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades;  
*but the word of our God will stand forever.*

<sup>9</sup> Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good tidings;  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,  
lift it up, do not fear;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
“Here is your God!”

<sup>10</sup> See, the Lord GOD comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.

<sup>11</sup> He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
and carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead the mother sheep.”

### **2 PETER 3:8 – 15a**

<sup>8</sup>But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day

of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

<sup>11</sup>Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? <sup>13</sup>But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; <sup>15</sup>and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

### **MARK 1:1-8**

“<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

<sup>2</sup>As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;

<sup>3</sup> the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight,’”

<sup>4</sup>John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And people from the whole

Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. <sup>8</sup>I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."