



Welcome

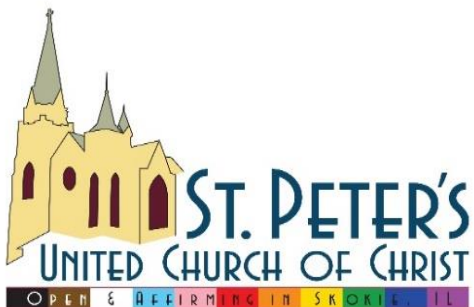
ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR

**Sunday,
December 22,
2024
10:00 AM**

**Fourth Sunday of
Advent**



Light One
Candle



OPEN & AFFIRMING IN SKOKIE, IL



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 after



Ways to Give

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

Use PayPal. <https://www.paypal.me/stpeteruccskokie>

Set up Vanco. <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-ZCME/home>

Set up your account or log in to give



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

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

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 22, 2024 at 10:00am
Fourth Sunday of Advent**

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

PRELUDE Selected

THE RINGING OF THE BELLS

THE SHARING OF ANNOUNCEMENTS Peggy Reins

Will those who are able please stand up

CALL TO WORSHIP

P: As we gather on this joyful Third Sunday of Advent, let us light the candle of joy in our hearts.

C: **We come to celebrate the joy that blooms in our lives and our world!**

P: In this season of anticipation, we remember the hope that guides our journey.

C: **We bring our hopes and dreams, seeking love and justice for all creation.**

P: God calls us to rejoice, to share our blessings, and to uplift one another in community.

C: **May our hearts be open to the joy that connects us in spirit and purpose.**

P: Let us embrace the promise of peace, and let our voices rise in song and celebration!

C: **Together, we ignite the flame of joy, as we worship our Creator with grateful hearts!**

P: Come, let us worship in hope, love, peace, and joy!

All: Amen!

Will those who are able please stand up

OPENING RESPONSE Refrain from

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel.” (Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come...)

O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran-som cap-tive Is - ra - el, That

Refrain

mourns in lone-ly ex - ile here, Un - til the Son of God ap - pear. Re

joice! Re-joice! Em - man - u - el Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

P: Please join me in prayer:

C: In the spirit of Mary, who traveled to share her joy and hope, we come before you with open hearts. We confess that, like her, we often find ourselves hesitant to embrace the extraordinary. We have allowed fear and uncertainty to overshadow our willingness to share our gifts and to celebrate the divine in our lives and communities. Forgive us, O God, for moments when we have closed our hearts

to the needs of others, turning away from the call to uplift those who are marginalized. We acknowledge the times we have been silent when our voices could have brought comfort, and when we have hesitated to act in love when the opportunities were clear. Help us, O God, to embody the love and courage that Mary showed. Teach us to carry your light into the world, to be vessels of peace, and to act with compassion and justice.

Silent Confession

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

P: Beloved, hear this good news: Just as Mary sang of God's mercy and mighty acts, so too are we reminded of the grace that surrounds us. In our seeking and our striving, we are met with God's unending love. You are forgiven and embraced, called to rise up with renewed spirit and purpose. Go forth in peace, knowing that you are cherished and invited to be a part of the unfolding story of love and justice.

C: Amen.

HYMN **"Mary Gladly Told Her Cousin"**

To the tune of "Once in Royal David's City"

Mary gladly told her cousin, "Praise the Lord! My spirit sings!"

Young and humble, she'd been chosen! God was surely changing things!

God of love, her words ring true As we sing her prayer to you:

"Now my soul is gladly singing At the greatness of the Lord.

I rejoice, for God is bringing His salvation to the world. All who live will say I'm blest Even in my lowliness.

"God is mighty, just and holy, And he's done great things for me.

Those who fear him know the mercy That God gives us endlessly.

Mighty ones are brought down low; Lowly ones find blessings flow.

"God has filled the poor and hungry, And he's sent the rich away.

God is active here in history, In a real and wondrous way.

God has promised, and I'm blessed, For I know God's faithfulness."

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The congregation may be seated

LIGHTING THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE: JOY

Anna and Ricky Riley

RESPONSE "Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah"

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

5
He is com - ing, tell the glad tid ings. Let your lights be shin - ning

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION AND SCRIPTURE READING

Rita McMahon

Old Testament Lesson

Micah 5:2-5a

Epistle Lesson

Hebrews 10:5-10

MUSICAL MEDITATION

Selected

Jim Kendros

GOSPEL

Luke 1:39-56

PASTORAL 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.

CALL TO OFFERING

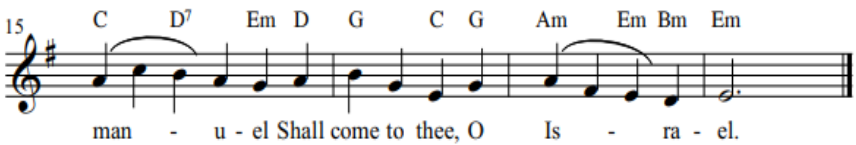
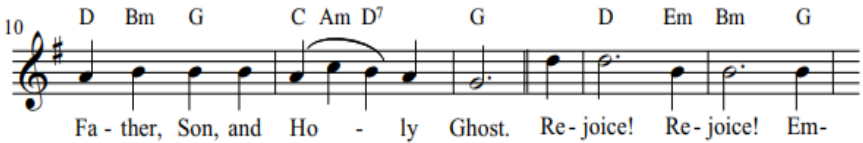
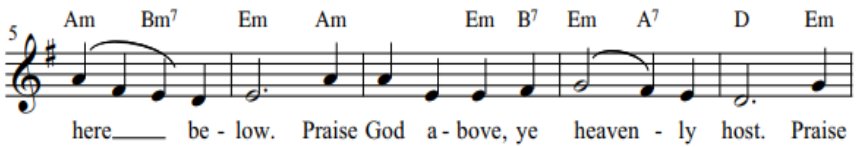
OFFERTORY

If you donate electronically, feel free to place an "Electronic Giving" card into the plate as it comes around so you can enjoy participating in the physical act of giving.

Will those who are able please stand up

OFFERTORY RESPONSE

"Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow"



PRAYER OF DEDICATION**A: Generous and joyful Creator,**

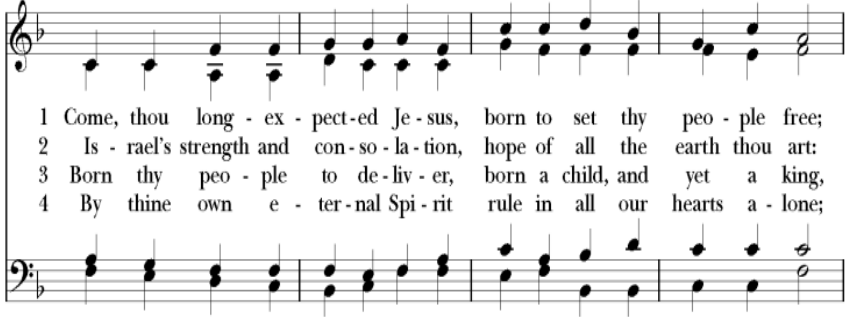
As we bring forth our gifts today, we celebrate the abundance you have given us. We dedicate this offering not just as a gift, but as a symbol of our gratitude and commitment to spreading joy in our community and beyond. May these resources be used to build bridges of connection, foster healing, and create spaces where all can experience love and acceptance. Let our hearts be filled with the spirit of generosity, and may our actions inspire hope and joy in the lives of others. In the spirit of love and unity, we dedicate this offering for your sacred work in the world. Amen.

The congregation may be seated

SERMON**“Song for All Seasons”**

Will those who are able please stand up

CLOSING HYMN “Come, thou long expected Jesus”



1 Come, thou long - ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo - ple free;
 2 Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art:
 3 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king,
 4 By thine own e - ter - nal Spi - rit rule in all our hearts a - lone;



from our fears and sins re - lease us, let us find our rest in thee.
 dear de - sire of ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.
 born to reign in us for ev - er, now thy gra - cious king - dom bring,
 by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

CHARGE & BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Selected

The music after the service is intended as a time of reflection. The 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

GUEST MINISTER

Rev. Wayne MacPherson

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Ben Westphal

DEACON

Barb Bailey

LIVESTREAM RECORDING

Beth Sterba

NURSERY ATTENDANT

Carolyn Van Til

News in the Pews

Welcome to worship. Like Mary and Elizabeth, we share the anticipation of what God is birthing — through Jesus, and in all our lives always.

Please extend a warm St. Peter's welcome back to Rev. Wayne MacPherson. Pastor Wayne is has served four congregations in the Chicago Metropolitan Association, two as Pastor and two as Interim Pastor. In addition, he worked nine years as a member of the staff of the Chicago Metropolitan Association and the Illinois Conference.

Join us for Coffee Hour downstairs after worship! Thank you to Karen Christianson for hosting.

Please join us for our special Christmas 🌟 Eve Worship, this Tuesday Dec. 24th at 7:00PM. Featuring special music, candlelight and carols; all are welcome and Holy Communion will be served.

The 🌲 Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross ☩ has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. You will find specially marked red envelopes in the pew racks and can also donate online. Thank you!

🍼 🧸 Baby Shower for Jesus! The Sunday School’s mission program is back this year. Donations should be placed under the Christmas tree in the sanctuary. A full list of items is in our Announcer and Weekly Update emails. Please, no clothing, blankets or toys. Items will be collected through December.

Update on our Pastoral Search - Our church is in an active search for an interim minister. St. Peter's Local Church Profile for an Interim Search is now posted on the UCC's Ministry Opportunities web site. That means ministers searching for a new call can now find us. We are looking for an Intentional Interim Minister, a pastor who is trained to lead a congregation through a transitional period, preparing the way for a settled pastor. The Church Council is leading the search process and will keep St. Peter's members, friends, and staff up to date on progress.

Office Manager Laura Olson will be on vacation from December 26th to January 6th.

Softgoods Clothing Drive in January! Start cleaning out those closets & storage spaces, we're looking for soft goods. Items such as 🧺 clothing, 🛏 bedding, linens, towels, 👟 shoes, 🧢 hats, belts, 👜 purses, 🧸 stuffed toys- we'll take them all as Savers pays by the pound. Start the new year off right and help us raise funds. Thanks so much for your consideration!

Sign up for ☕ Coffee Hour! We are getting back to regular coffee hours on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month but need folks to sign-up to host. Hosting is basically bringing some coffee cake, etc. to share, making coffee and light clean-up. We are also working on new ways to sign-up (including online) soon; contact the office in the meantime if you'd be willing to host or cohost and we'll find you someone to assist if needed.

The Livestream Team Needs Your Help! The livestream setup is very easy to run, and scheduling is very flexible but we are really in need. Please contact Jen S. directly if you can join- we hear all the time that people ARE watching our livestream, and we want to be sure it's available every Sunday for those folks.

Our People

Please keep St. Peter's extended family in your thoughts and prayers. Other folks that need your prayers include:

- Parents of Anna Riley, prayers for healing and strength.
- Ricky Riley's heart surgery has been scheduled for February 7th, 2025.
- Ann Herren's two daughters; Betsy Herren is doing well having finished her radiation treatment. Jennifer will be having surgery for breast cancer, date TBD.
- Sharon Johnson's daughter Donna is doing very well after having surgery but continues her battle with Lymphoma, which can be controlled but not cured.
- 15-year-old family friend of Denise Hopp is suffering from self-harm.
- Cancer has returned for Susan Garcia's Aunt Janice, whom we've prayed for previously.
- Jane Abramchik continues to recover at home aided by a team of home caregivers and her husband Paul.
- Paul Brzozowski's recent MRI was encouraging but his treatment for brain cancer is continuing.
- Annie has asked for continuing prayers for the many people struggling with cancer.
- Those affected by the devastation of Hurricane Helene and Milton and other disaster victims.

Others in our church family to keep close in our hearts include Larry Baumhardt, Ursula Dworak, Lois Jarmuth and Bob Seitman.

If you are aware of others to include in our shared prayers, please let a church officer, an Elder, or the office know!

This week we wish a Happy birthday to Michael Chavez, Payton McDonald, Carol Iannotti, Carol Hook, Laura Olson and Beverly Mau.

According to the schedule and barring any switches, next Sunday's Lector will be Peter Svenson, and our Nursery Attendant will be Rita McMahan.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

PRESIDENT	Peggy Reins
VICE-PRESIDENT	Ann Herren
TREASURER	Chad McCoy
SECRETARY	Annie Noorts
FINANCIAL SECRETARY	Maria Altmayer

Regular Reminders!

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.

We are always grateful for all offerings to the church. So many thanks to everyone who's been keeping us going with your donations! See inside the bulletin's front cover for details on how to donate.

Our mini-food pantry is a daily mission this church does for the community of Skokie. If you are able, please bring food to help us keep it going. Food can be left on the shelves by the office doors, or in the narthex. Thank you so much!



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

MISSION MOMENTS

Moving with Mary's Song (12/22/2024) **Fourth Sunday of Advent** **VIOLET**

Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

A bit of trivia on this the fourth Sunday of Advent. What's one of the earliest Advent hymns ever to be recorded? (Hint: It's found in today's reading from Luke.)

It's Mary's song of praise, also known as The Magnificat, which is Latin for "my soul magnifies the Lord."

Mary, the teen betrothed to Joseph, whose life has been turned upside down when an angel tells her she has found favor with God and will bear a son, goes to visit her cousin, Elizabeth. Elizabeth is also with child, carrying the wilderness wandering baptizer, John.

When the two women meet, the child in Elizabeth's womb leaps with joy and she says to Mary, "Blessed are you among women!"

Such a greeting would lead any person to break out in song — as Mary does. But her words are not the maternal sentiments one might expect. Rather, 20th century German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis for his role in speaking out against Hitler, described Mary's song as, "the most passionate, the wildest, most revolutionary Advent hymn ever sung."

This is no meek and mild Mary cast in the glow of heavenly light that we see on Christmas cards. This, says Bonhoeffer, is "the passionate and enthusiastic Mary who speaks out there."

Mary's song reminds us just what Christmas — this Christ moment — is all about. She sings of God who fills the hungry with good things. She sings of God who sends the rich away empty. She sings to the One who lifts the lowly — to the One who does great things through people like her who are often deemed unworthy.

Sadly, we live in a world where the lowly still get pushed to the side, silenced and ignored. But as Advent comes to an end — and soon we will be singing about holy and silent nights — can we take a moment once again to listen to Mary's song, believing how God is still doing great things for many Marys — and Toms, Rauls, Juans, Anitas, and you.

Yes, YOU. For God is wanting to use your life as well in making this world a better place for all.

The Magnificat is not filled with fa la las. It is a "hard, strong song," says Bonhoeffer, one which "tells of the power of God and the powerlessness of humankind."

And that is exactly why Mary sings it for us this day.

Amazing God, who works through us all, may this day we move with Mary's song, tapping our feet, snapping our fingers, and singing praises of how You are indeed doing great things among us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Scriptures for Sunday, December 22, 2024

Please join me in spirit of prayer as we offer up our Prayer of Illumination.

Holy Spirit of Wisdom, open our hearts and minds to your truth. Help us to see with compassion, to listen with humility, and to grow in love and understanding. May these sacred words challenge and inspire us, leading us ever closer to mercy, justice, and peace. Amen.

Our first scripture reading this morning is Micah 5:2-5a.

^{a1}But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

³Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth,

⁵and he shall be the one of peace.

This ends our first reading. Our Epistle Lesson is Hebrews 10:5-10.

Consequently, when Christ^{1a} came into the world, he said,

"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;

⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, 'See, I have come to do your will, O God'
(in the scroll of the book^{1b} it is written of me)."

⁸When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And it is by God's will^{1c} that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

This ends our reading from Hebrews. Our worship continues with a musical offering from our guest musician, Jim Kendros.

Thank you, Jim! Please rise for the reading of the Gospel. Our Gospel lesson is Luke 1:39-56.

³⁹ In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³ And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴ For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be^[a] a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."⁴⁶ And Mary^[b] said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.

Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name;

⁵⁰ indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his child Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

⁵⁶ And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

This ends our scripture readings the for this morning's service. May God grant us a wise and generous understanding of this God's holy word. You may be seated.