



First Reformed United Church of Christ

Where People Discover...
The Love of God...
The Power to Love Others...
The Ability to Love Ourselves.

The Worship of God

December 13, 2020
Third Sunday of Advent

Gathering

"BOLD" indicates congregational response

Prelude "Prayer at the Crib" Robert Wilson
[Lani Smith]

Welcome to Worship Rev. Elizabeth Horton

Call to Worship "Prepare the Way of the Lord" Ellen Peterson

The Advent Wreath Sunday of Joy Rev. Horton

A Time of Joy When has the Church been a source of joy for you? Walter Hoffman

The Candle of Joy May God use us all to bring joy to a hurting world. Rev. Horton

Response "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" Ellen Peterson

Witness to Joy Rev. Horton

Instead of a typical Confession of Sin, today let us try something that may be
equally challenging in light of the difficult year we have spent:

Let's give witness instead to signs of Joy in our midst,
Signs that our God is doing something new,

What are signs of hope, of encouragement, of comfort,
of joy that point to the Holy One at work?

Assurance of Grace

Holy One, we give you thanks that you meet us in our struggles,
and call us into a future of hope and joy.

You have promised to be faithful, and we open our hearts to you in trust
in the name of the one you send, Jesus.

Hymn "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus" Ellen Peterson

Centering

Old Testament Reading Isaiah 61:1-4,8-11 Jeremy Peterson

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 broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,
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.
I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns
herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to
spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up
before all the nations.

Prayer for New Days

Rev. Horton

Just when it seems that all is lost,
that our brokenness, our failure, has gone too far,
You call a new day to dawn.

Just when it feels like hope is foolish,
that darkness and despair are the only true realities,
You call the sun to rise.

Just when we think we're alone and abandoned,
that life is nothing but pain and emptiness and meaninglessness,
You arrive among us again.

God of Advent and of Renewal, we praise you for every new day that absorbs the darkness;
for every rising sun that calls the night to end;
for every messenger of hope and forgiveness that baptizes us with your love. Amen

Hymn

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

Ellen Peterson

Proclaiming

Scripture Reading

John 1:6-8,18-28

Rev. Horton

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord," ' as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John 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.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Sermon

Decide: Furniture or Foundation

This blessing may come as a song or a silence;
As hearty bread or exquisite sorbet;
As belly laughter or gentle hug,
As enlivening idea or painstaking process.

This blessing might rest on you, gently, in the deep, star-filled night,
Or push, pull, and play among sunbeams and cold breezes.
This blessing might hide, especially when you are most desperate to see it.
And then, all of a sudden, there it is.
Or isn't.

Or maybe, probably, it is in that other place, the place you didn't think to look;
The place you least expected to find it.

This blessing of joy is a shape-shifter
And so, we miss it sometimes.
But trust me, it is around here, somewhere,
Always waiting on the edges
And nestled deeply in the center
Of who God created you to be.

Sending

Benediction

Rev. Horton

Postlude

"Gloria in Excelsis Deo"
[Todd Kendall]

Robert Wilson

Join our **Fellowship & Prayer Concerns** after worship from 12-12:30PM and catch up with your church friends!
Join Zoom Meeting [HERE](#) (Meeting ID: 207 685 007 Passcode: 3n7IX8 Dial in: +1 301 715 8592)

DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

14th ...Marge Doty
...Merle Hodges
15th ...Janelle Bunn
17th ...Christina Grzech
19th ...Maxx Clark

ANNIVERSARIES

18th ...Doug & Barbara Sink
19th ...Lee & Mary Jo Jessup

OUR CHURCH AT PRAYER

OUR MEMBERS:

Susan Odom, Ellen Bouchard, Kelly Greathouse, Margot Everhart, Lisa Price, Deanna Michael

OUR MEMBERS AT HOME AND IN CARE FACILITIES:

Peggy Bates, Janelle Bunn, Marzell Crofts, Ruth Essick, Pattie Everhart, Vogen Everhart, Lib & Jimbo Hinkle, Marguerite Leonard, Bob Shaak, Lib Sink, Katherine Skipper, Carolyn Spivey, Adena Wall

Piedmont Crossing: Mary Berrier

OUR FRIENDS:

Ken Richardson and family (friend of Camille Morgan), Wendi Greene (Bill Robbins' sister), Ashley Thomason Hutcheson (Ron & Heidi Hutcheson's daughter-in-law), Barbara Miller (Eddie Yates' mother), Angie Bouchard (Lee and Ellen Bouchard's youngest daughter)

**Indicates newly added. Names will remain on the list for 4 weeks. To add a name to the prayer list please call the church office (336-248-2617).*

WEEKLY CALENDAR

SATURDAY - December 12:

10:00AM until...FRUIT BASKET & CARD DELIVERY FOR OUR MEMBERS AT HOME

SUNDAY - December 13: 3rd Sunday of Advent

9:45AM Adult Sunday School: "Company's Coming" Week 3

Deck the Halls ([Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11](#) & [John 1:6-8, 19-28](#)) (Facilitator: Eddie Yates)

Join the Zoom Meeting [HERE](#). (Meeting ID: 890 2652 8333 Passcode: 634119 Dial in: +1 929 205 6099 US)

10:45AM Worship online via YouTube [HERE](#) or Facebook [HERE](#).

12:00PM Fellowship & Prayer Concerns

Zoom Meeting [HERE](#) (Meeting ID: 207 685 007 Passcode: 3n7IX8 Dial in: +1 301 715 8592)

7:00PM FRUCC Choir Zoom: Choir members may join the Meeting [HERE](#).

Meeting ID: 963 6555 5643 Passcode: 985846

TUESDAY - December 15:

12:00PM 2CFAR: Crucial Conversations on Faith and Race via Zoom. Join the meeting [HERE](#).
(Meeting ID: 873 4191 8684 & Password: 222495)

7:00PM Adult Book Study via Zoom: *Evangelicals*. Join Zoom Meeting [HERE](#).

(Meeting ID: 836 9173 5429 Passcode: 262712 Dial in: +13017158592)

SUNDAY - December 20: 4th Sunday of Advent Children & Youth Christmas Pageant

2020 CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING

9:45AM Adult Sunday School: "Company's Coming" Week 4

Waiting on the Threshold ([2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16](#) and [Luke 1:26-38](#)) (?Facilitator: Eulene Shepherd)

Join the Zoom Meeting [HERE](#). (Meeting ID: 890 2652 8333 Passcode: 634119 Dial in: +1 929 205 6099 US)

10:45AM Worship online via YouTube [HERE](#) or Facebook [HERE](#). Children & Youth Christmas Pageant

12:00PM Fellowship & Prayer Concerns

Zoom Meeting [HERE](#) (Meeting ID: 207 685 007 Passcode: 3n7IX8 Dial in: +1 301 715 8592)

UPCOMING EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23: COME SEE LUMINARIES AT DUSK!

Our youth are making 200 luminaries in response to the money collected to help children for Christmas. They will be placed around the church and lighted at dusk this evening.

THURSDAY, December 24: CHRISTMAS EVE...CHURCH OFFICE IS CLOSED

7:00PM **VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE** via YouTube [HERE](#) or Facebook [HERE](#)

FRIDAY, December 25: MERRY CHRISTMAS! CHURCH OFFICE IS CLOSED

SUNDAY, December 27: 1ST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

9:45AM Adult Sunday School: "Company's Coming" Week 5

Enjoying the Company ([Isaiah 61:10-62:3](#) and [Luke 2:22-40](#)) (Facilitator: Rev. June Grubb)

Join the Zoom Meeting [HERE](#). (Meeting ID: 890 2652 8333 Passcode: 634119 Dial in: +1 929 205 6099 US)

10:45AM Worship online via YouTube [HERE](#) or Facebook [HERE](#).

12:00PM Fellowship & Prayer Concerns

Zoom Meeting [HERE](#) (Meeting ID: 207 685 007 Passcode: 3n7IX8 Dial in: +1 301 715 8592)

THURSDAY, December 31: NEW YEAR'S EVE

FRIDAY, January 1: NEW YEAR'S DAY...CHURCH OFFICE IS CLOSED

FIRST REFORMED UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

104 EAST CENTER STREET, LEXINGTON, NC 27292

PHONE: 336-248-2617 **WEBSITE:** www.frucc.org **FACEBOOK:** facebook.com/firstreformeducc

Ministers: The Congregation

Pastor: Rev. Elizabeth Horton (elizabeth@frucc.org, cell/text #336-972-8895)

Minister of Pastoral Care: Rev. June Grubb (jgrubb3@triad.rr.com #336-248-5668)

Choir Director: Ellen Peterson (ellenrpeterson@gmail.com)

Organist: Robert Wilson (robert@frucc.org)

Admin. Asst.: Carolyn Robbins (carolyn@frucc.org) **Financial Secretary:** Paula Lopp (paula@frucc.org)

FIRST REFORMED UCC ANNOUNCEMENTS

LOOKING TOWARD SUNDAY: A MESSAGE FROM REV. HORTON



This Advent we are taking our cues from the "Minimalist Lifestyle" approach, as we seek to discover what are the essentials of our faith during this time of waiting.

We have *Assessed the Mess, Removed the Clutter*, and on this 3rd Sunday of Advent, we will "*Decide: Furniture or Foundation?*" What in our faith is foundational and what can be recovered, reupholstered, or rearranged? Again, we will hear the prophet Isaiah and John the Baptist help us seek answers.

As we light the Candle of Joy, Walter Hoffman describes for him, *how the church has been a source of joy*.

Our Christmas Eve isn't turning out exactly like we had hoped. We are not holding in-person services, due to the rapidly rising number of Covid cases. We will hold a 7pm Christmas Eve service virtually on Facebook and YouTube. I know it's not the same -- at all. Yet I pray that, even without our sacred rituals, we will experience the wonder and hope of the coming of Christ.

Please come see the Luminaries on Wednesday, December 23rd as the Youth seek to witness to the world, the Light (200) of Christ!

Peace,
Elizabeth

ADVENT 2020: ONLY THE ESSENTIALS – HOPE PEACE LOVE JOY

12/13 - *Decide: Foundation or Furniture?* [Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11](#) & [John 1:6-8, 19-28](#)

12/20 - *Create a Home for Everything* [2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16](#) & [Luke 1:26-38](#)

12/27 - *Enjoy the Company* [Isaiah 61:10-62:3](#) & [Luke 2:22-40](#)

ATTENTION CURRENT COLLEGE STUDENTS

It is time to apply for the Hinkle, Sink, Swing Scholarship. Applications are available in the church office or can be emailed by contacting paula@frucc.org. **Applications should be completed and back in the office by December 31, 2020.**

CHILDREN'S VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

Any children and youth interested in taking part in our **VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT** this year, please contact the church office **BY MONDAY, DECEMBER 14.**

NO IN-PERSON WORSHIP SERVICES

The local and state news is full of reports stating the spread of Covid has taken a sharp turn upwards. This information, along with recent numbers from the Davidson County Health Dept, was shared and discussed at length at the December 6th Consistory meeting. As a result of the rising numbers, and in keeping with our spirit of love for one another, the church leadership concluded that we will suspend in-person gatherings and hold **only virtual** worship services until mid-January. This means **NO Wednesday worship** services and **No Christmas Candlelight** services in the sanctuary.

VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Our Christmas Eve service will now be virtual, but we still want the opportunity to share with one another *glad tidings of great joy*. Therefore, will you help us make a **First Reformed Digital Christmas Card?**

We would like you to:

Make a VIDEO wishing your church family a Merry Christmas OR Submit a FAMILY PHOTO.

Ellen Peterson has graciously agreed to compile them into a digital presentation to show before Christmas.

DEADLINE TO SUBMIT is Sunday, DEC. 20th.

Guidelines for Videos:

- should be less than 30 seconds.
- Film in landscape orientation
- Identify yourself/family, then say your greeting.
- Speak loudly!
- Share video with Ellen Peterson via Google Drive at ellenrpeterson@gmail.com

Guidelines For Photos:

- Make sure you include in your name(s).
- Drop by church office or send to Ellen via Google Photos at ellenrpeterson@gmail.com

Let us give thanks for the season of Advent... the season of Hope...

Let us keep our hope in the One who dwells among us.

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL: Company's Coming

Who doesn't like Advent? It is a season of excitement and anticipation and joy. Lots and lots of joy. Even when we acknowledge that we aren't ready for what is coming, for the realm that is promised, for the kin-dom we hope for. We admit we have fallen short; we confess that we are wrapped up in ourselves and in things that don't last; we admit that our watchful waiting has fallen by the wayside. And yet, in this season, there is joy. And we have a sense that we can start all over again, because "Company Is Coming." Join the Zoom meetings [HERE](#).

(Meeting ID: 890 2652 8333 Passcode: 634119 Dial in: +1 929 205 6099 US)

December 13...Week 3: Deck the Halls (Eddie Yates, facilitator)

[Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11](#) and [John 1:6-8, 19-28](#)

December 20...Week 4: Waiting on the Threshold (Eulene Shepherd, facilitator)

[2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16](#) and [Luke 1:26-38](#)

December 27...Week 5: Enjoying the Company (Rev. June Grubb, facilitator)

[Isaiah 61:10-62:3](#) and [Luke 2:22-40](#)

January Week 6: Living the Celebration (Smithie Parrish, facilitator)

[Ephesians 1:3-14](#)

OUR ANGEL TREE

Purchase an Angel Tree in honor or in memory of someone, and it will be placed on the tree in the Education Building breezeway. Funds will benefit our benevolences. To purchase, please contact the church office or click [HERE](#).

ALTERNATIVE GIFTS

The holiday season is quickly approaching. Have you thought about what to buy for family and friends? Why not give to a local charity in their honor or in memory of a loved one? For an alternative gift, donate to any of the church benevolences and the church office will give you a special "alternative gift" card to send to your honoree.

To purchase, complete the form below and return it to the church office with your donation, call the church office, or click [HERE](#) to donate. This is such a meaningful way to honor someone on your gift list, benefit those in need, and help our church meet its benevolences for the year.

FIRST REFORMED UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST		
Alternative Gift Giving		
Name: _____	Phone # _____	
IF YOU WISH TO MAKE A DONATION TO ASSIST WITH BENEVOLENCES BUT HAVE NO PREFERENCE WHICH ORGANIZATION IT BENEFITS, PLEASE PUT THE DOLLAR AMOUNT UNDER UNDESIGNATED BENEVOLENT DONATION.		
	Donation	# Cards
Undesignated Benevolent Donation		
Southern Conference		
Blowing Rock Conference Center		
Elon Homes for Children		
Johns River Valley Camp		
Lancaster Seminary (WNCA Scholarship Fund)		
Nazareth Children's Home		
Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM)		
UCC Retirement Home (Trust Fund - Piedmont Crossing)		
Local		
Communities in Schools		
Community Garden		
Community Outreach (Charles England, Etc.)		
Crisis Ministries		
Davidson Medical Ministries		
Davidson Prison Ministry		
Family Services of Davidson County		
Girl Scout Troup #2160		
GLAMA - Crisis Fund		
Habitat for Humanity		
Hospice of Davidson County		
Lexington Housing CDC		
Pastor's Discretionary Fund		
Pastor's Pantry		
Pathway of Hope		
Salvation Army		
***TOTAL DUE		

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

“For Such a Time as This.” **Esther 4:14**

In the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, which administers the Christmas Fund, experienced a 400% increase in requests for emergency grants over the previous year. Thanks to the generosity of more than 275 donors to urgent appeals for gifts to the Christmas Fund, UCBMA was able to say “yes” to each of these requests.

Most of the donors who responded to these special emergency appeals were older persons and nearly half were first-time contributors to the Christmas Fund. Many are also themselves recipients of Ministerial Assistance.

Here are just a few of the notes of thanks received from some of the Emergency Grant recipients:

“I must tell you that before I opened the envelope with the check I prayed that whatever the contents, that somehow I would make the days to come work . . . and when I opened that envelope with a great amount of trepidation, I could not believe my eyes that you and your Committee granted me even more than I had requested! I am still in shock, and still feeling so very grateful as I sit down with that fear off my shoulders.”

“Wow, what can I say but a very humble thank you. This is tremendously generous and I never, ever expected it. The best I had hoped for was to cover my recent medical bill. I am surprised and tearfully grateful.”

“The emergency grant money arrived in last night's mail. THANK YOU to all who approved this emergency grant. I will be able to pay back loans that were made to make rent. We will also be able to supplement our rent money for quite some time until greater income starts coming in. We are hopeful those days will come.”

“I'm speechless - Thank you all so very, very much! Keeping you all in my prayers. May the gift of your generous blessing spread wide and far.”

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you would like to participate in the online worship services, please let us know. If you're interested, please contact Rev. Horton or the church office. **Please click [HERE](#) to sign up.**

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT!

If you happen to miss a week of our worship services and other events that are shared on our Facebook and YouTube pages, they will remain on **Facebook** and **YouTube**'s history, so you may go back to watch any time.

STAY CONNECTED WITH THE NEWS OF THE SOUTHERN CONFERENCE

[Click here for the news of the of the Western Association and Southern Conference of the UCC:](#)

<https://wnca-soc.org/enews/>