

How Lovely Are



The Messengers

The Music & Message of Advent

*The Third Sunday of Advent
Gaudet/Joy Sunday
December 17, 2017 -- 10:00 a.m.*

HIGHLANDS UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Today is the 3rd Sunday in the Season of Advent, which is traditionally known as **“Gaudet”** Sunday because the first word in the Latin service was ‘gaude’ or ‘rejoice. ‘Joy’ Sunday shares news of God’s sending us a savior.

Music as we prepare for worship is John Rutter’s arrangement of J.S. Bach’s “Sinfonia from the Christmas Oratorio.”

As a part of today’s service we will be receiving our annual “Joy Offering.” An insert is in the bulletin and envelopes are in the pew racks.

Today’s service features our Handbell and Adult Choirs as they share an Advent program of music and proclaim a message of Joy.

Our Highlands Handbell Choir begins our service with an arrangement of the Advent Hymn, “People, Look East” arranged by Jason Krug. “People Look East” was written by Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965) Farjeon grew up in England in a home surrounded by books. She and her brothers both enjoyed reading stories to one another and writing their own. In the United States, Farjeon’s best-known work is the hymn “Morning Has Broken” (later recorded by Cat Stevens, now Yusuf Islam, in 1971); but in England, she is beloved as the author of more than eighty children’s books and poem collections.

Lighting the Advent Wreath today is the Connor Family .

“Gaude!” (Joy) Sunday **“The Music and Message of Advent”** **December 17, 2017 --10:00 a.m.**

“Because of his boundless love, Jesus became what we are that he might make us to be what he is.” Irenæus, *Third Century*

MUSIC AND TIME OF PREPARATION

(The 3rd Sunday in Advent is ‘Joy’ Sunday. As we gather to share in God’s joy coming to us take this opportunity to pause for a moment and pray for God’s presence among us today, our worship leaders, our choirs, those who worship with you and for yourself.)

WELCOME AS WE GATHER & SHARING LIFE IN THE CHURCH

PRELUDE

“People, Look East” arr. Krug
The Highlands Handbell Choir

CALL TO WORSHIP AND LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH **The Connor Family**

INTROIT

“Shine on Us, O God of Justice”

(Tune: Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence)

(Dr. Dave sings through 1 time, congregation joins on the second:)

“Shine on us, O God of justice; Guide our path through gloom of night;

Bear within us Wisdom’s glory; Come to us, O Christ the Light.
Guide us through these days of Advent,
‘til your world returns to right.”

A READING FROM THE PROPHET

ISAIAH 61:1-4; 8- 11

This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God. We rejoice in the Anointed One who came and who comes. With joy-filled hearts, we join the energy of our life to the life whose birth we anticipate. With Christ, we, too, will bring good news to the oppressed, bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, and proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

We, who are filled with anticipation, feel hope rise up within us. And so we lit the first candle and name it Hope. And we who are here prepare a new way in our living for God’s comfort to come to us. And so we lit the second candle and name it Peace. For us, God has replaced our mourning with the oil of gladness, so we light this third candle and name it Joy.

*If Comfortable, Please Stand

ADVENT PRAYER

“Lord of Advent, we await your coming and even as you approach us, we find ourselves yearning for you. Complete our Joy, O God, and come to us once again reconciling all the world to you and your love for us. Amen.”

“HYMN OF ADVENT “John Came Preaching, Bearing Witness”

(Tune: “Angels, from the Realms of Glory”)

“John came preaching, bearing witness, Pointing to God's only Son. He proclaimed the truth with boldness: "Now believe! God's light has come!" Yet he would not be the focus; He proclaimed a greater One.

Thank you, God, for all your servants Who proclaim your light each day. Brave and bold, like John, they bless us, Pointing us to Jesus' way. They proclaim your kingdom's nearness In the things they do and say.

**May we live in that tradition; Fill us with integrity.
Take away our vain ambition; Keep us in humility.
Make us faithful in our mission As we serve Christ joyfully.**

*PASSING THE PEACE

May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And Also With You.

(At this time you are invited to share a sign of peace: a hug, a handshake, a kiss...)

*Choral Response:

**“Good Christian friends, rejoice, With heart, and soul, and voice;
Come ye one and come ye all, embrace the faith that does enthrall;
Jesus Christ will come to save!**

**Calls you one and calls you all, to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ will come to save! Christ will come to save!”**

*PRAYER OF APPROACH AND CONFESSION

In Advent we hold on to purple, a color of hope, peace and love. We also embrace, in rose, the message of Joy that is coming to us. Let us pray together:

With the hope and peace of Advent, our hearts await messages and messengers, confident you will answer, coming Lord. We celebrate the joy of reaching out to each other this season and every season. On this Sunday when we reflect on joy,

**We confess that joy can be elusive in this season.
We can get frustrated – even angry – at things that do not go the way we expect or want. We can get overwhelmed, and want it all to be over and done with.**

Our opening Hymn is another of the Advent Hymns of Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, “John Came Preaching, Bearing Witness,” which is the theme of today’s serving. Being a witness or messenger of God’s good news was the task of the prophets and of John the Baptist and also our task.

In our final ‘gathering act’ we “Pass the Peace” as an act of caring, welcome, and mutual love. Please remain standing as we sing a verse of “Good Christian Friends Rejoice.”

Because of God’s love proven to us in the sending of Jesus we are bold to approach God and to confess our sins. In the Presbyterian Church our confession is in the form of a corporate prayer that in the speaking become our own. The Assurance of Pardon enables us to prepare our hearts and minds for the “Proclamation of the Word:” unencumbered by the burden of our sin.

The "Proclamation of the Word" for today is primarily an offering to the Glory of God in this Advent Season by the choirs of HUPC. We thank God for the musical leadership of our directors, choirs and volunteers.

(We use the 'common lectionary' which is a guide that assigns readings over a three-year cycle. God's people are given the opportunity to hear and read along in God's Word from the Bible).

We stand for the reading of the gospel in a very old tradition of the church. In response to the Word read there is the 'preaching of the word for our living today.' This includes words for 'the young church' and all who gather. Our Choirs offer musical 'proclamations' in song.

Traditional "Lesson and Carol" services begin with a 'bidding prayer' which is a 'call to prayer' for a specific reason. Today we are 'bid' to prepare for Christ's coming.

We may think that joy means being happy all the time, and feel guilty when we cannot muster one more smile, or when we find ourselves confronting the host of other feelings that are all a real and legitimate part of this sacred time.

We find ourselves equating this season with material things, and often judging others when we think that is all they are doing.

Forgive us, God.

Cut through the wrappings that entangle the precious gift of this holy time. May our preparations and our celebrations magnify you and proclaim your glory, your justice, your peace, and your hope for all generations. Amen.

**Lord, Have Mercy Upon Us!
Christ, Have Mercy Upon Us!
Lord, Have Mercy Upon Us!**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

God's promises always come true, bringing salvation and hope, offering a future of possibility, and renewed lives. As we wait for Jesus to be born anew in our world, hear the words of God's promise, and know that Emmanuel - God with us - is not just a dream, but a reality!

Thanks be to God!

***RESPONSE TO FORGIVENESS ("Of The Father's Love Begotten" vs. 3)**

"Christ, to Thee with God the Father, And, O Holy Ghost, to Thee, Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving And unwearied praises be: Honor, glory, and dominion, And eternal victory, Evermore and evermore! Amen."

"THE PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD"

***NEW TESTAMENT LESSONS**

John 1:6-8, 19-28

(NT: p. 91)

A TIME WITH THE YOUNG CHURCH

"JOY"

INTERLUDE

(All children, ages 4 through 2nd grades, are invited to attend "Children's Church" after "A Time with the Young Church." Their leader will meet them in the back of the sanctuary. They may be picked up after worship in the Family Life Center, room #207.)

MEDITATION

"How Lovely Are the Messengers"

A BIDDING PRAYER FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

Beloved in Christ, in this joyful season of Advent be it our care and delight to further prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the angels: in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and with the Shepherds adore the Child lying in his Mother's arms. ...

... These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the words which Christ himself hath taught us:

"Our Father, . . . For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen."

THE INVITATORY

"Veni, Emmanuel"

(O Come, O Come Emmanuel)
(arr. Krug)

"O come, O Come, Emmanuel...."

ISAIAH 52:6 – 10; ROMANS 10:14-15, 18

Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore on that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I.

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'
Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the Lord to Zion.
Break forth together into singing,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the Lord has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
The Lord has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

"But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?"

As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'

So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ. But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have;
For 'Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the world.'

ANTHEM

"How Lovely Are the Messengers"

(F. Mendelssohn)

"How lovely are the Messengers that preach us the gospel of Peace.

To all the nations is gone forth the sound of their words.

To all the nations is gone forth the sound of their words,

Throughout all the lands their glad tidings.

How lovely are the Messengers that preach us the gospel of Peace."

"How Lovely Are The Messengers" is the chosen title for today's musical proclamation. We will be using the music of John Rutter and others who are all in their words and music 'lovely messengers' of the good news God shares with us.

The progression of our proclamation in word and song begins with the Advent readings of Isaiah and continues with the story of Jesus' birth in Luke.

Our Handbell Choir begins with one of the most endearing of all Advent songs. In the Latin, "Veni Emmanuel," or "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." In Latin the chorus says, "**Gaudet! Gaudet! Emmanuel**" which means "Rejoice." Today is 'Gaudet' Sunday or JOY Sunday and the color for the day is the joyful 'rose.'

A classic Advent Anthem sets the theme of the day in Frederick Mendelssohn's "How Lovely Are The Messengers." This anthem is shared by choirs worldwide in its self proclamation of the 'loveliness' of those who preach, or sing, or tell the good news, the "gospel of peace."

ISAIAH 7: 13- 14; 9:2, 6-7; 11:1-4, 6-9

“Then Isaiah² said: ‘Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.’³

“For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.”

"A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth. The wolf shall live with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

John Rutter's "What Sweeter Music" is another classic Advent Carol that carries on the theme of proclamation of the message God would have us share. It begins with the question, "*What sweeter music can we bring, Than a carol, for to sing The birth of this our heavenly King?*" It is sung today in response to the prophetic words of Isaiah who speaks of God's intention to send his 'messiah' into the world.

CAROL "What Sweeter Music" Rutter

*"What sweeter music can we bring, Than a carol,
for to sing The birth of this our heavenly King?
Awake the voice! Awake the string!
Dark and dull night, fly hence away, And give the honor to this day,
That sees December turned to May. Why does the chilling winter's morn
Smile, like a field beset with corn? Or smell like a meadow newly-shorn,
Thus, on the sudden? Come and see The cause, why things thus fragrant be:
'Tis He is born, whose quickening birth Gives life and luster, public mirth,
To heaven, and the under-earth.
We see him come, and know him ours, Who, with his sunshine and his showers,
Turns all the patient ground to flowers. The darling of the world is come,
And fit it is, we find a room To welcome him.
The nobler part Of all the house here, is the heart. Which we will give him;
and bequeath This holly, and this ivy wreath, To do him honor, who's our King,
And Lord of all this reveling.
What sweeter music can we bring,
Than a carol for to sing The birth of this our heavenly King?"*

LUKE 1:26-35, 39-42; 2:1-7

"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a Virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" "Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her." "In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb".

"In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."

CAROL "Christmas Lullaby"

John Rutter

"Clear in the darkness a light shines in Bethlehem: Angels are singing, their sound fills the air. Wise men have journeyed to greet their Messiah; But only a mother and baby lie there. Ave Maria: Hear the soft lullaby the angel hosts sing. Ave Maria, Maiden, and mother of Jesus our King.

Where are his courtiers, and who are his people? Why does he bear neither sceptre nor crown? Shepherds his courtiers, the poor for his people, With peace as his sceptre and love for his crown. Ave Maria: Hear the soft lullaby the angel hosts sing. Ave Maria, Maiden, and mother of Jesus our King.

What through your treasures are not gold or incense? Lay them before him with hearts full of love. Praise to the Christ child, and praise to his mother Who bore us a Saviour by grace from above. Ave Maria: Hear, O hear the lullaby angels sing. Ave Maria: Hear the soft lullaby the angel hosts sing. Ave Maria, Maiden, and mother of Jesus our King."

"Christmas Lullaby," also composed by John Rutter was commissioned in 1989 by the Bach Choir in celebration of the seventieth birthday of its conductor, Sir David Willcocks. The haunting melody of the verses and the reflective refrain of 'Ave Maria' have made this an immensely popular carol. Rutter, who wrote words and music, followed the common and traditional practice of blending images from the Christmas Eve story -- holy Family in the manger, angels, wise men -- with more generalized calls for us to worship the holy Child. His text does, however, continually blur the focus between the Child and the "Maiden and mother of Jesus our King"; each choral refrain begins with a particular reverence for Mary, "Ave Maria."

We sing the Carol today in response to the familiar proclamation from Luke. A message we hear over and over that never grows old in its timeless grace and glory.

Our offertory Carol is also by John Rutter, "All Bells In Paradise." This gentle yet uplifting carol was commissioned for the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, and was first performed during the 2012 Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. Rutter's gift for melody is in evidence throughout the work, with a sense of hushed awe leading to moments of glorious optimism. The text, written by the composer, is inspired by the fifteenth-century Corpus Christi Carol. The anthem is in response to the story of the 'message of the angels' which rings in the night sky, which is coupled with the story of the gifts of the Magi, who proclaim, through their 'kneeling and gifts' the importance of this new born king.

It gives us a reminder that we, too, are called to kneel in the presence of Jesus offering ourselves to his service. We also receive the "Joy" offering which helps us proclaim in our actions our commitment and dedication to 'Emmanuel – God With Us!'"

LUKE 2:7-14; MATTHEW 2:7-11

"In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah,³ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,⁴ praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'"

"Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY CAROL "All Bells in Paradise"

*"Deep in the cold of winter, Darkness and silence were everywhere;
Softly and clearly, there came through the stillness a wonderful sound to hear: All bells in paradise I heard them ring, Sounding in majesty the news that they bring; All bells in paradise I heard them ring,
Welcoming our Savior, born on earth a heavenly King.
All bells in paradise I heard them ring: 'Glory to God on high' the angel voices sing.*

*Lost in awe and wonder, Doubting I asked what this sign might be:
Christ our Messiah revealed in a stable, A marvelous sight to see.
All bells in paradise I heard them ring,
Sounding in majesty the news that they bring; All bells in paradise I heard them ring, Welcoming our Savior, born on earth a heavenly King.*

*He comes down in peace, a child in humility,
The keys to his kingdom belong to the poor;
Before him shall kneel the kings with their treasures, gold incense and myrrh.
All bells in paradise I heard them ring, Sounding in majesty the news that they bring; All bells in paradise I heard them ring,
Welcoming our Saviour, born on earth a heavenly King.
All bells in paradise I heard them ring:
'Glory to God on high' the angel voices sweetly sing."*

DEDICATORY PRAYER

God of Advent, in your exquisite and abundant love, you gift us.

**Help us, Lord Jesus, who has come, is coming now, and will come again in glory to have truly grateful hearts.
Amen.**

REVELATION 1: 722:8-9, 12-13, 20-21; PHILIPPIANS 2:9-11

“Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen.”

“I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your friends the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God! ...[Jesus says] “See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. The one who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon ” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.”

“Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

ANTHEM

“Lo! He Comes With Clouds Descending”

*“Lo! He comes, with clouds descending, once for our salvation slain;
thousand thousand saints attending swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ the Lord returns to reign.*

*Every eye shall now behold him, robed in dreadful majesty;
Those who set at nought and sold him, pierced, and nailed him to the tree,
deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing, shall the true Messiah see.*

*Those dear tokens of his passion still his dazzling body bears,
cause of endless exultation to his ransomed worshippers;
with what rapture, with what rapture, with what rapture gaze we on those glorious scars!
Yea, Amen! let all adore thee, high on thine eternal throne;
Savior, take the power and glory; claim the kingdom for thine own:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Thou shalt reign, and thou alone. Amen!”*

*CHRISTMAS AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (unison)

**“Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the rose I have in mind,
What Child is this, Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?
This is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary!
Then let us all with one accord Sing praises to our heavenly
Lord, That hath made heaven and earth of nought,
and with His blood our life hath bought.
NOEL! GOOD NEWS IS HERE!
BORN IS THE KING OF ISRAEL! Amen!”**

Advent is a 'both/and' season. We celebrate both the “coming of the Lord” which occurred two thousand years ago and the “coming of the Lord” that is yet to occur. It is because of the 'first coming' that we have the boldness to proclaim Hope, Peace, Joy and Love in our Advent proclamation.

We conclude the “Music and Message Of Advent” with an anthem, “Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending” which is an anthem of the second, or yet to be, Advent of our Lord. The ‘Second Coming’ is spoken of with many scriptural allusions including these from Revelations and Philippians.

Our “Christmas Affirmation of Faith” is a statement which proclaims and affirms all that we celebrate in our Advent and Christmas celebrations.

We embrace the opportunity to gather as a faith community in A "Prayer For Christmas Joy." In the prayer we will be offered an opportunity to 'lift up' those in need of new Advent Joy.

Our ongoing and new prayer concerns are listed on the back page of the bulletin. If, prior to the service, you wish to have attention given to 'special' prayer concerns please speak with the pastor.

After we sing the beloved, "O Come All Ye Faithful," our "Charge and Blessing" challenges us to leave here today, filled with wonderful music to make our final preparations for our celebration of Christmas. We live in a culture that has secularized Christmas but we do not have to do so.

Next Sunday is Christmas Eve and we will worship at 10 a.m. as usual, and then our Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Services will be at 5, 8, and 11 p.m. (Nurseries will be available at 5 & 8, and the 5 p.m. service embraces the story from a child's eye view.)

On Christmas morning we will gather at 10 a.m. in the Dining Hall for a 'come as you are Fellowship' which will include 'cinnamon buns with Dr. Dave and Susan.'

As our Advent wait comes to an end we are invited to "Come and Worship, Come and Worship, Worship Christ the new born King!"

Please join us after worship today in the Dining Hall for a time of fellowship.

***PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS HOPE**

We join in this most holy night of the year proclaiming:

Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace.

Our hearts are filled with joy as we celebrate the birth of our Savior.

We sing praises to God and glorify God's name as the angels did on the night of God's birth. We rejoice in the fact that the promise of long ago has now been fulfilled.

O God, we celebrate your goodness to us as we join in the triumph and joy of Christmas. As your love has been revealed in all of its fullness, we pray that love may abound in our hearts today and always. Grant that the spirit of the Christ-child may dominate our lives in every way. Hear us as we lift up to you those who are in need of new Advent Joy this day....

In His name we pray.

Amen.

***CONGREGATIONAL CAROL "O Come, All Ye Faithful"**

**"O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant,
O Come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.**

Come and behold Him, Born the King of angels;

**Chorus: O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.**

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning;

Jesus, to Thee all glory given;

Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing. Chorus

Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation;

Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!

Glory to God, all Glory In the highest; Chorus

***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ Child.

Amen!

***BENEDICTION & RESPONSE (O Come, All Ye Faithful, vs. 4)**

"Amen, Lord, We Bless Thee, Born For Our Salvation,

O Jesus, Forever Be Thy Name Adored;

Word Of The Father, Now In Flesh Appearing!

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord."

* * * * *

*If Comfortable, Please Stand



HIGHLANDS' HIGHLIGHTS
 This Week at Highlands
 Week of December 17, – December 23, 2017



This Week's Calendar of Events:

<p>Today:</p> <p>Monday:</p> <p>Tuesday:</p> <p>Wednesday:</p>	<p>9:00 a.m.</p> <p>10:00 a.m.</p> <p>7:00 p.m.</p> <p>9:00 a.m.</p> <p>6:30 p.m.</p> <p>7:30 p.m.</p> <p>7:15 p.m.</p>	<p>Sunday School</p> <p>Worship Service</p> <p>Session Meeting</p> <p>Quilting and Sewing Group</p> <p>HPGP Christmas Program</p> <p>Advent Study (Note the later time.)</p> <p>Adult Choir Rehearsal</p>
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“WELCOME ONE ANOTHER, AS CHRIST WELCOMES US!”

HIGHLANDS UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH WELCOMES YOU! We are so glad that you are here and worshipping with us this morning. We are privileged to have you with us and would invite you to a time of Fellowship in our Dining Hall after worship. Please do us a favor by signing the Friendship Register and mark appropriate boxes. There are also visitor cards in the pew racks. **FIRST TIME VISITORS – WE HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU!** Thanks!

MEMBERSHIP AT HIGHLANDS is open to all who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives and who wish to join in the worship and ministry of this church. The pastor or any member of the Session would be more than happy to discuss this with you.

A NURSERY IS PROVIDED IN THE FAMILY LIFE building for those who wish to have their children cared for during worship. Parents receive a 'silent pager' for peace of mind and will be paged in case of any need. Highlands takes great care in caring for your children.

CHILDREN'S CHURCH FOR AGES 3 THROUGH 1ST grade is in the Family Life building after "A Time with the Young Church," except on Communion Sundays. A nursery is provided for infants through two years of age in the Family Life Center. Worship folders for young Highlands' worshipers can be found at the usher's stand. **PARENTS** please help your children with their worship experience. **WE LOVE OUR CHILDREN AT HIGHLANDS** and want to keep them safe! Please help us with this goal by ensuring that **all children are supervised by an adult while on the playground at all times.**

DEVICES ARE AVAILABLE FOR THOSE IN NEED OF HEARING ASSISTANCE AT THE USHER'S STAND.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

WELCOME ONE ANOTHER... AS CHRIST HAS WELCOMED YOU! TODAY IS the 3rd Sunday of Advent or the Sunday of JOY. The color for today is **ROSE** because it is an expressive joyful color. The Latin title for today is **"Gaude Sunday"** because **"Gaude"** means **"Rejoice."** **"Gaude"** was the first word in the Latin Mass. Hence our call today to **Rejoice In the Lord and have JOY!**

THE SESSION WILL MEET TOMORROW EVENING AT 7 p.m.

OUR HIGHLANDS PRECIOUS GIFTS PRESCHOOL will be sharing their annual Christmas program on Tuesday evening at 6:30 p.m. Come and catch the Christmas Spirit with this delightful Christmas program.

DR. DAVE INVITES YOU TO JOIN US FOR OUR FINAL ADVENT STUDY on Tuesday evening at 7:30 p.m. **(Note later time this week)** This has been a fun study that will mix Advent scripture lessons with an enduring story of Christmas, "A Christmas Carol" by Dickens. It is called "The Redemption of Scrooge." We'll watch clips and discuss the story as it relates to Advent. Please join us as we greet the "Ghost of Christmas Past" and then experience the "redemption of Scrooge!"

OUR ALTERNATIVE GIFT MARKET CONTINUES TODAY! Why not finish up your Christmas Shopping right here after worship? Does Micah's Backpack and Family Promise and other local missions need support? Are there 30 children in Haiti whose lives are sustainable with our help? Maybe it would honor Aunt Joyce or Uncle Donnie to be the recipient of a card that says, "Family Promise or Micah's Backpack or a child (or more) in Haiti is cared for in YOUR honor!" Alternative gifts mean impactful giving! We **NEED** sponsors for 30 children in Haiti at \$25.00 per month (\$300.00 for the year.) Dr. Dave and Susan are sponsoring three. We have had a few families to sponsor two. We need more sponsorships to assure our ability to meet our commitment to the Grace of Mercy children. Thanks!

WELLNESS WILL RETURN ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10TH: Our program begins with seated yoga at 10:00 a.m. and Adult LOGOS follows around 11:00 am. Seated yoga can easily be adapted to anyone's physical interest and we are looking forward to John Smith's usual presentation making Bible study amusing and informative.

WE'RE CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF LOGOS AT HUPC!! We're taking a short break, but will be back on January 10th. We're having a great time at logos – learning a little and laughing a lot; come and join us on January 10th!

HIGHLANDS STRONG. I think everyone would agree that Highland's is "Strong" because of our industrious and dedicated staff. Accordingly, your Session has approved a "Love Offering" for the three Christmas Eve Services as token of our appreciation. So, in this season of giving, prayerfully consider this opportunity to say, "Thank You".

WHAT A BLESSING!! Our Family Promise guests scheduled for this week was canceled as all three families moved into their new homes!! However, we have been asked to sponsor the family of a single dad with twin 14-year-old boys with necessities for their new home. Their needs include a full/queen bed, food, and Walmart gift cards or cash. Since we want them to have these items before Christmas, we request donations by December 20. Please call Sue Heckler at 891-6034 with any questions. Thank you for your generous and thoughtful consideration and MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Eat more chicken! FUNDRAISER OPPORTUNITY. The Preschool is having its annual fundraising opportunity with the Chick-fil-A 2018 Calendar. Each calendar features 12 months of beautiful cow artwork as well as monthly offers for **FREE** Chick-fil-A food. HPGP is now selling the 2018 calendars for \$10, cash only. You can come by the Preschool office any day Monday through Friday from 7:00am to 6:00pm or catch me after worship on Sundays. Thank you for your support to the Church Preschool and the children we serve. Family Promise's "Wheels on the Bus" campaign was a huge success! A new bus will be purchased and there are funds for transportation needs in 2018. Highlands **will** be hosting guests the week of February 4. Thanks so much for your support of this very important mission. We appreciate it – Sue!

OTHER ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE

THE THOUGHTFUL CHRISTIAN CLASS will study

HIGHLAND'S BABY SHOWER: Matthew 25:40 – just as you did it to one of the least of these.... you did it to me. Thanks to all of you who answered your call to discipleship with your generous contributions to the Highlands Baby Shower. This ministry shows care and support to many new mothers and babies of our community via your contributions of new baby clothes, blankets and more. You are a blessing. Highlands Mission Committee – for more information contact Susan Lee at 887-4661.

ARLINGTON COMMUNITY SERVICES: ACS needs the following items: toothpaste, powdered milk, canned milk, canned pasta, pasta sauce, canned meat, canned tomatoes, canned potatoes, peanut butter, jelly- HUPC's specialty, and toilet tissue. Fourteen jars of jelly were collected this week. Every grocery order going out of ACS has a jar of HUPC jelly. **Don't forget your jelly next Sunday!**

UPDATE FROM YOUR MISSION COMMITTEE. We need 15 more 16 X 26-inch hand towels, individual toothbrushes and fingernail clippers in order to have another "batch" of kits ready to go. Thanks for your help!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED LOVE AND SUPPORT FOR THE CHILDREN OF HAITI. Please make sure your payments are marked "HAITI CHILDREN" to ensure the money goes into the right account.

PRAYER CONCERNS AND TODAY'S SERVICE –

SPECIAL AND ONGOING PRAYERS: PLEASE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING IN YOUR PRAYERS THIS WEEK:

IN THE HOSPITAL THIS WEEK:

OUR FRIENDS IN CARE FACILITIES: *At Brookdale Southside: (9601 Southbrook Dr., Jax, FL 32256); Hank Green(N-122); At Clare Bridge Louise Keen; At the Atrium (9960 Atrium Way, 32225): Boyd and Doreen Harris (#528) , Doris Ruby (#219) and Kit Fink who is in Rehab. Others: Fay Sweeney (# E10 A) at Cypress Village, 4600 Middleton Park Circle East , Jacksonville, FL 32224).*

AT HOME: Richard Marsh, Don Hall, Jo and Hoagy Carmichael, Nancy Hoot, Kinzey & Betty Reeves, Patty Strader, Marilyn Reed, JoAn Ewing, Bruce and Annette Marley, Gwen Brown, Barbara Ash and Carolyn Starkweather.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS: Debbie Douget's dad, Don Seay, Justin Marley (Bruce and Annette's grandson), Kenneth Moon (Barbara's son), Lenwood Lee (Dr. Dave's father), Ashley Parsons (DCE at Orange Park PC), Ed Mallard.

IN THE MILITARY: Jacob Loerop (Jacob.Loerop@CVN68.navy.mil), IT3 Jacob Loerop CVN 68 USS Nimitz Unit 100103 Box 1771 FPO AP 96620. Amelia Powell (amelia.powell@cvw7.navy.mil) AT2 Powell, Amelia N., VAQ-140, Unit 200107 Box 142, FPO AP 96601.

PRAYER BEARS: Prayer Bears and Caring Critters are available in the Fellowship Hall after each service.

MEMBER CARE: Bev Connell is our **Prayer Ministry Coordinator**. Bev's number is (904) 868-9659. Her email address is bevconn2016@gmail.com. Please contact Bev with your prayer request. As always, prayer requests can be made as well by calling the church office, completing the gray slips in the church pews, using the church website (hupcjax.org under "Contact Us") or by notifying your Shepherd.

FAMILIES WE ARE PRAYING FOR THIS WEEK: Alice (Babe) Livingston, Jacob Loerop and Pete and Michele Loerop.

OUR VOLUNTEERS THIS MORNING ARE: Greeters: David and Jane Bauerlein. Children's Church Leader: Chad Sambito.