

# Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ

## Second Sunday of Advent

December 8, 2019

9:30 AM



A Just Peace Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

A God is Still Speaking Congregation

Our faith is 2000 years old; our thinking isn't

A compassionate community, intentionally inclusive,  
openly searching, joyfully serving in the way of Christ



## The Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is richly symbolic. As a whole, it represents the universal Community of God. The wreath is in the shape of a circle in order to symbolize the eternal dimension of the love of God for all things at all times. A circle has no beginning and no end. There is no temporal or spatial beginning and end to the love of God. At all times, and for all things, God's love is ever-pervasive throughout all of creation.

The circle of the wreath also sets the boundary for all that is inside the circle. All that is necessary for the spiritual and moral life is contained within the circle. All other things are extraneous and may even be destructive. At the center of the circle is the white Christ candle — a symbol of purity, perfection, and wholeness. In it the many virtues become one virtue. Surrounding that candle are four other candles depicting the governing virtues necessary for living a life of purity and perfection in the Spirit of Christ: hope, faith, love, and joy. When all the candles are lit, they establish a glow of warmth and peace that lights the entire wreath. This symbolizes the harmony that exists between the virtues as well as their interdependence.

The flame of each candle represents the inspirational and motivational aspect of each governing virtue — individually, and for the whole. In having the passion for hope, faith, love, and joy we -through God's grace- provide spiritual and moral light for ourselves and also for others. Each candle is rooted in the midst of evergreen foliage. Evergreen foliage symbolizes the naturalness of living according to the virtues in one holy community of diverse individual parts. It also symbolizes the enduring and undying commitment necessary for living in this Community of God. Evergreen thus symbolizes life itself — the only life worth living: a life lived spiritually and morally. The Advent Wreath is thus an allegory of life within the Community of God.

ADVENT WREATH READINGS  
by Rev. Bret Stuart Myers

*Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ*  
*A Just Peace, Open & Affirming, & God Is Still Speaking Congregation*

"An inclusive spiritual family shaping a better you for creating a better world.  
A place to make a difference."

## **Second Sunday of Advent**

**December 8, 2019**

**Sacred Fellowship 9:30 AM**

We are delighted that you are here today! We hope you will find us an affirming, uplifting, and committed family of faith. Here we work to make everyone, without any exceptions, to feel accepted, inspired, and encouraged in their spiritual journey. In dialogue, we seek to understand. In encouragement, we seek to heal. In all things we yearn to live by love, for peace, with joy. This is a place where your intellect will be challenged, your heart will be nurtured, and your spirit refreshed. Varying beliefs are expressed openly and freely, and your doubts will not be suppressed. We trust that we are all, every person and part of creation, continuing to be blessed by God's grace; and that in community we can help each other to see this grace alive in our lives and relationships. We hope to share our gifts with you, even as we pray that you will want to share your gifts with us. Whoever you are and wherever you may be in your life's journey, we invite you to be a part of our lives and our spiritual home. Welcome!

## **CALLED TOGETHER AS SPIRITUAL FAMILY**

### **Gathering Music**

#### **Welcome and Announcements**

Please sign the registration pads when they are handed out  
by the ushers and pass to your neighbor in the pew.

We ask that you please shut off cell phones and practice quietness during the service.  
Please join us for fellowship and refreshments after the worship in the Fellowship Hall.

\* = You are invited to stand as you are able.

### **Prelude**

**Welcoming the Light of Love in Our Midst**      Acolyte lights altar candle.  
We prepare ourselves for communing with the sacred as love's light is brought into our awareness. The light of love burns within and among each of us, and we carry that light into our sanctuary; visually reminding us of the image of the divine that lives in our hearts, minds, and souls – and that we nourish through our faith-filled fellowship.

**Choral Introit**      Our King & Saviour Droweth Nigh

**Affirming God's Presence in Us All**      "You Matter!"

### **Sharing Christ's Peace**

As a sign of our reconciliation with God and one another, greet and welcome those around you and share "the peace of Christ."

**\*Hymn for Faith & Preparation** “With Joy Draw Water” #109; vss. 1-4

### **\*Centering Our Souls**

You call us together, O God, not simply for the comfort of our souls, but to prepare us for the task of creating justice and peace in our world.

**We come to hear your voice – prodding us to greater faithfulness and discipleship; preparing us for the journey of living in love by peace.**

We can become too preoccupied with “better days” that once were. Our lives sometimes feel like stumps, trees cut down with little hope of new life.

**But you tell us that a shoot can arise from the stump, that a branch can grow out of the roots of faithfulness.**

You remind us that you do not judge us by our positions or our success in this world, but rather by our commitment to righteousness and faithfulness in living by your ways of love and peace.

**You have provided through your prophets, ancient and contemporary, a vision of the world you want for us – one in which all creatures, human and non-human, live in the blessings of harmony and mutual care.**

We are prone, however, to not take your vision seriously – treating it as mere hopes and wishes, but not that which can be lived and practiced in real life.

**We would like to see that vision take place, but we want it to take place by your supernatural miracles rather than by the diligence and discipline of our own lives lived in perpetual struggle to overcome the various forces of this world that detain us.**

You ask us to prepare the way of Christ and to make it easier for others to walk by Christ’s virtues on a straight and level path; and yet we fail to recognize how much effort that will take from us, generation after generation.

**Instill in us a faith to endure the hardships of living constantly by love and peace.** May our discipline and work be inspired by your vision for a better world, a world in which there are no enemies, no antagonists, no poor, or weak, or oppressed – where there is no predator or prey, but only peace between all creatures great and small.

**May we be the ones who prepare for your reign in every heart, mind, and soul by inviting you to reign first in our own. In the name of the Prince of Peace, may it be so.**

## **WE LISTEN FOR THE SACRED IN THE MIDST OF OUR LIVES**

**Advent Wreath Ceremony**

The Candle of Faith and Preparation

Hanna Starck

Rebecca Woodward

**Prayers**

**Sharing Our Joys and Concerns, and Acts of Compassion or Kindness**

**Silent Meditation: The Prayers of the People**

**Pastoral Prayer**

**Unison Prayer**

**"Prayer from the New Zealand Book of Common Prayer"**

**Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. May it be so.**

**\*Hymn for a New World Order**

**"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"**  
#116; vss. 1-2, 4, 7

**Scripture Lesson**

Isaiah 11.1-10

**Message**

**"Faith in Peace Requires Preparation for Peace"**

**\*Hymn for the Preparation of Peace**

**"Isaiah the Prophet Has Written of Old"** #108

**Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings**

**Gift of Music: Choral Anthem**

**Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence**

arr: Sir Stephen Cleobury (31 Dec 1948-22 Nov 2019)

**\*Song of Dedication**

Tune: Old Hundredth; p. 7

**The advent of the Christ draws near.**

**With hope and faith we conquer fear.**

**Let love and peace in us be found.**

**Let joy within our hearts abound. Amen**

## **\*Unison Prayer of Dedication**

**O God, whose coming was tender and mild, but whose presence is empowering and passionate: We are thankful for the hope you inspire in our world where poverty is painful and loving-kindness is lacking. Jolt us with justice that the world's prayers for peace may be answered. Jostle us with generosity that we may know the joy of giving. In this season of Advent, enter into our hearts that hope may arise within us to expect that which has been promised: that nourishment will be provided for the hungry...that comfort will call upon the suffering...that freedom will ensue for the imprisoned...that justice will be imparted to the persecuted...that compassion will nurture the oppressed...that peace will pacify the violent...and that love will live in the midst of all peoples and creatures that you have declared good. May this gift of hope that you give to us be passed on to others by how we give of ourselves through our time, talents, tithes, and offerings. Amen**

## **Choral Benediction**

May This Benediction Give Us Peace

## **\*Encouragement for the Journey**

This is the season of Advent, the season of something divine coming into the world.

Prepare yourselves for the divine to come into your life.

Hope for it; but more than that, expect it.

Look for ways in which the divine can find its way into you.

Then look for ways in which you can share the divine with others.

Love like you want to be loved. Forgive like you want to be forgiven.

Be the peace to others that you want for yourself.

Give such that others will call you generous.

Live such that others see the beauty of your Spirit.

## **Postlude**

### **The Light of Love Goes into the World**

Love's light is not extinguished from our worship, but is transferred from the flame of the candles to the passion in our hearts that we may go forth to let the light of love shine through us as we go to serve in the world.

### **WE GO FORTH AS PEACEMAKERS TO CREATE JUSTICE FOR ALL**

Our worship is fulfilled, and our purpose is confirmed,  
through our service as God's stewards to the world and all creation.

Use the blessings God has given you as you share  
the joy in your heart, the wisdom in your mind,  
the love in your spirit, and the peace in your soul.

Thank you for sharing sacred fellowship with us.

Plymouth Congregational UCC is an open and affirming church, embracing diversity in our congregation and community, and affirming the dignity and worth of every person. We are an inclusive community of faith that celebrates God's presence through shared stories and experiences of sacred meaning on Sundays, and through the nurturing of divine values and virtues manifested in active practices in our daily lives. We welcome all persons into the full life and ministry of the church, regardless of race, ethnic background, gender/sexual identity, sexual orientation, physical or cognitive capabilities, nationality/citizenship, or circumstance of life. We are also a Just Peace church, emphasizing peace and nonviolence in all our relationships, personally and collectively, because we see the sacred worth of every person throughout this good earth. We are a Progressive Christian family of faith. We invite you to hear our experiences of the divine even as we are curious in learning about your own spiritual journey. We hope our values may intersect as together we strive to make our corner of the world a better place. Get to know us! We'd like to get to know you!

### **Keeping in Prayer**

Ralph Reynolds	Mike & Michele Ettelston	Dick Brace
Jesse Armstrong	Janet Taylor	P.V. George
Cassiie and Kevin	Sheri Stanley	Barbara
Pastor Bret's Mom, Ruth Ann Myers		Marilyn Mason

Bob Feeny and Sam Lovett,  
members-in-discernment in the Merrimack Association

*If you have any prayer requests, please fill out a prayer card  
located in the pew rack and drop it in the offering plate.*

### **Save these Dates**

Tonight - Sunday Niters at Arline Bownes'  
December 14<sup>th</sup> – Lessons and Carols 3:00 PM

### **Announcements**

**Coffee Hour** - Many thanks to everyone who brought food for our Advent Decorating Pot Luck luncheon. We enjoyed a variety of delicious selections and without the structure of assigning types of dishes to last names by the alphabet!

On Sunday, **December 8<sup>th</sup>**, everyone is invited to Coffee Hour in the Fellowship Hall following Service for a beverage, snack and conversation.

Perhaps we will have more surplus garden produce and other items to share. Please leave a cash donation which will go to "Voices against Violence".

There are many opportunities to help in the kitchen by setting up prior to the service, cleaning up afterwards or bringing in snacks or other foods to share. You may sign-up on the bulletin board near the pass-through window to help or use one of the dated tags on the Will-U poster at the entrance to Fellowship Hall if you are bringing a snack. Please contact Chris Pollock at 603-674-8590 or e-mail at [rpollock@metrocast.net](mailto:rpollock@metrocast.net) to sign up or if you have any questions. Thank you from the Hospitality Committee!

**Sunday Niters** - ...in the form of A Yankee Swap will hold forth at Arline Bownes, 36 Parker Street in Plymouth **tonight** at 5:00 PM. So bring an inexpensive, but useful gift to swap plus a food dish.

**Plymouth Area Community Closet Holiday Basket Project** – Volunteers are needed for packing and delivering boxes and/or baking Christmas goodies for local families. The Holiday Basket Project has been providing baskets for families in need of a holiday meal. Your help would be greatly appreciated! The packing day is Friday, **December 13<sup>th</sup>** at 1:30 PM and the delivery day is Saturday, **December 14<sup>th</sup>**, beginning at 8:00 AM. We will meet at Holy Trinity Christian Life Center Hall at 11 School Street.

**Music** – Mark your calendars... On Saturday, **December 14<sup>th</sup>**, at 3:00 PM is Lessons and Carols at PCUCC. We will have 40 singers!!

**Volunteers Needed** – PCUCC is in need of 15 readers for our Christmas Eve Candle Light Service on **December 24<sup>th</sup>** at 7:00 PM. Please contact Eileen or Debbie if you are able to help. Thank you!

**Feeding Our Children Together** – We are in need of plastic bags for the children's weekend food supply. Thank you for your donations!!

Hannaford is donating \$1.00 to FOCT for every bag that they sell. The donation will help support feeding the hungry. So if you need some bags, please look for the designated bags at Hannaford and support our local program to feed hungry children in Plymouth!

**Many thanks to our families for decorating our Sanctuary!** Everyone did a fantastic job "Hanging the Greens" to make our Sanctuary look wonderfully festive!

The Rev. Bret S. Myers, Interim Pastor  
Deborah Healey, Church Office Administrator  
David Williams, Director of Music  
Ashley Paine, Organist/Accompanist  
Larry Spencer, Church Treasurer  
Celia Woolverton, Grace Counseling

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Liturgist, Bill Heron

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*Please make an appointment with Rev. Myers if you would like to meet with the pastor.  
You may call the church office at 603-536-2626,  
email him at [revbmyers@yahoo.com](mailto:revbmyers@yahoo.com), or call/text his cell at 608-370-9472.*

*Bret's office hours are Sunday 10:45 AM – 12:00 PM, Tuesday 1:00-7:00 PM,  
Wednesday 1:00 – 8:00 PM, Thursday 2:00-5:00 PM and other hours by appointment.*