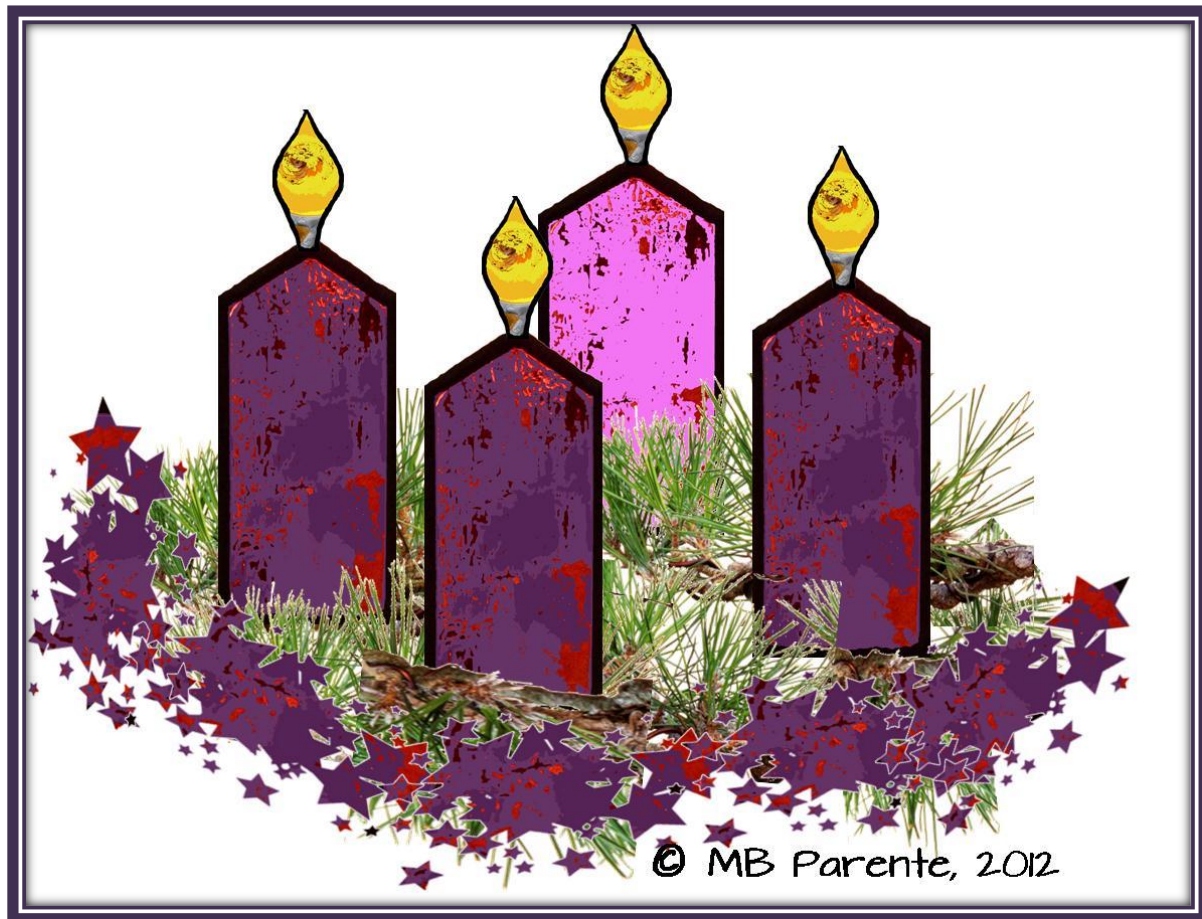


Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 22, 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."

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 22, 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 and Savior Droweth Nigh Wihla Hutson

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 the Reign of Love & Peace**

"We Hail You God's Anointed"

#104

***Centering Our Souls**

Spirit of love and peace:

We gather on this 4th Sunday of Advent eagerly waiting for the birth of the sacred into our lives and world.

Like Mary, we each carry within us that which is divine.

Will we too deliver it to the world? Will we face the possibilities of being judged for letting the ideals of love and peace permeate our thoughts, hopes, and ambitions?

Mary did not know the response of Joseph, her family, her society and perhaps her own insecurities to her pregnancy.

Joseph, when confronted by that which was divine, yielded to it. May we have the courage and strength to do the same.

Let our love of you and others incarnate that sacred presence in our spirits that we may be able to, like Joseph, respond with forgiveness, reaffirmation of relationship, and peace.

Teach us how to let your Holy Spirit invade our bodies and souls that we may give birth to the sacred in our thoughts and practices. May it be so.

WE LISTEN FOR THE SACRED IN THE MIDST OF OUR LIVES

Advent Wreath Ceremony

The Candle of Love & Peace

Rev. Suellen Skinner

Rev. Rebecca Larson

A Time for All God's Children

"Birthing Love and Peace"

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 of Joseph's Character** "Gentle Joseph, Joseph Dear" #105

Scripture Lesson Matthew 1.18-25

Message "Inviting the Sacred into Our Lives"

***Hymn for Incarnated Love & Peace** "Now Bless the God of Israel"

WE DEDICATE OURSELVES TO GOD'S SERVICE THROUGH FAITHFULNESS

Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

Gift of Music: Choral Anthem

The Lord Returns to Reign

Gilbert M. Martin

***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 P.V. George Marilyn Mason
Cassiie and Kevin Sheri Stanley Barbara
Pastor Bret's Mom, Ruth Ann Myers

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

December 24th – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
December 29th – Alex Ellsworth, Guest Musician 9:30 Worship

Announcements

Coffee Hour - Today, everyone is invited to Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following the Service for a beverage, snack, and conversation. Perhaps a mug of hot chocolate would be nice on a chilly morning? We will be featuring Christmas Cookies and other holiday treats. Please bring your favorite to share. Also note that we will be overlooking our monthly "Reduced Sugar Day" for this occasion.

The following Sunday, **December 29th**, there will not be a Coffee Hour. Have a Happy New Year, and see you again in Fellowship Hall on January 5th, 2020 when we begin Coffee Hour for 2020.

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 to sign up or if you have any questions. Thank you from the Hospitality Committee!

Sunday Worship Service Flowers - We need someone willing to coordinate flowers for the communion table from **December thru May**. (Sylvia Shaw coordinates June thru November.) Folks sign up to bring flowers most Sundays, but we need someone willing to coordinate this. If you would like to do this, please contact Eileen Torrey at eileen@weisshouse.net.



PCUCC Christmas Eve Candle Light Service

Tuesday, December 24th

7:00 PM

Nursery Provided

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

pastor@uccplymouth.org
office@uccplymouth.org
musicdirector@uccplymouth.org
organist@uccplymouth.org
treasurer@uccplymouth.org
gracecounseling@uccplymouth.org

Liturgist, Carol Stewart

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ
4 Post Office Square, PO Box 86
Plymouth, NH 03264

(603)536-2626 • office@uccplymouth.org • www.uccplymouth.org

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, 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.*