

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ

Fourth Sunday in Advent: Joy



December 24, 2023

9:30 am

We Practice Just Peace: doing justice, seeking peace
We are Open and Affirming: welcoming LGBTQ+ people

We are an Anti-Racism church

🎵 We Listen for the Still Speaking God
Our faith is 2000 years old; our thinking isn't.

Please inquire with people before assuming they are okay with physical contact.

GATHERING

Prelude

In Dulci Jubilo

George Lachenauer

Welcome & Announcements

*Please join us at 7 pm this evening for our **Christmas Eve Service**.*

Please sign the red friendship pad as it is passed to you and return it to the center aisle noting your neighbor in the pew. You may leave your email if you would like to receive our weekly newsletter.

If you want to know more, email the office at office@uccplymouth.org.

Sunday School for all ages begins after the Message for All Ages on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Sundays. Children are welcome to fill a bag with books and toys, which are in the narthex, to use during worship.

Introit

Here I Am the Servant of the Lord. Alleluia

John Ferguson

Lighting of the Advent Candles

Rev. Bill Torrey & Steve Majeski

Unison Advent Prayer

O Holy One, as Christmas draws near, there is a sense of excitement in the air. We can feel joy in our lives and see it in those around us. Still, for some of us this is a sad time because of unhappy things that have happened in our lives. Help us to have the joy that does not depend on earthly happiness but on you. Help us to be filled with your joy so that we may share it with a joyless world. Amen.

*Those who are able may stand.

***Call to Worship**

Liturgist – Steve Majeski

One: People, of God, sing and rejoice! God has come to us in Jesus Christ.

All: God has entered our existence of joy and sorrow, taking on human likeness in Jesus, born of Mary

One: Therefore, we rejoice, praising God and singing

All: Glory be to God in the highest, on Earth peace to those who will good for all people. Christ is born. Alleluia!

***Hymn**

Angels from the Realms of Glory

NCH (black) #126

***Passing of the Peace**

If you are at home, we invite you to send someone a note of peace today.

One: The Peace of Christ be with you

All: And also with you.

Unison Gathering Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you for your life in the human form of Jesus in the rebirth of Christ in the human heart touched by your love on this earth.

May the joy of Christmas never end but continue until at last your reign of justice and peace is fully established on this earth and may we be instruments of your peace in Jesus' name with kindness, and some patient humility in love. Amen.

Unison Prayer of Confession including Silence for Personal Reflection

O God, you have come to us in Jesus, yet we confess failure to be your true children of God, as Jesus was. Rather than accept new life in him, we tolerate hatred, violence, and injustice in the world that you sent the Christ Child, begotten from your own being. Forgive us that we may live as your children through the grace of our Lord and Savior, Son of God present in the Spirit. Amen.

Assurance : May the Lord God grant remission of sins and true amendment of life.

Response Spirit of the Living God NCH (black) #283

**Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me; Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me. Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.**

Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me.

Children's Message

Rev. Bill Torrey

Response Jesus Loves Me NCH (black) #327

Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so.

Little ones to him belong; they are weak, but he is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!

The Bible tells me so.

HEARING THE WORD

Scripture

Luke 2:1-19

1 John 4:9-14

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: Amen.

Message “The Glory of the Story of the First Christmas: Jesus Christ” Rev. Bill Torrey

*Hymn

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

NCH (black) #144

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Offertory

We invite you to remember your support for the ministry of PCUCC.

Hosanna Now Through Advent

Marie Pooler

1. Hosanna now through Advent with loving hearts we sing,
For Jesus Christ is coming to be his children's king.
2. Hosanna! Blessed Jesus, come in our hearts to dwell,
And let our lives and voices your praise and glory tell.
3. For we who sing hosanna must like our Savior be
In gentleness and meekness in love and purity
4. Hosanna! Let this welcome ring out from ev'ry heart;
Draw near to us, O Jesus, and nevermore depart.
5. So when we see you coming with angels in the sky,
Hosanna, loud hosanna shall be your children's cry.

- Claudia F. Hernaman (1838-1898)

*Doxology

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise God, all creatures here below
Praise God above, you heavenly host:
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

***Unison Offertory Prayer**

O God, most merciful and gracious, of whose bounty we have all received, accept, we pray, this offering of your people. Remember in your love those who have brought it and those for whom it is given; and so follow it with your blessing that it may promote peace and goodwill among all people and advance the realm of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayers of the People

You will also be invited to offer your personal prayers from the silence of your heart.

Pastor: O God, in your grace and mercy . . .

Response: Hear your people at prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (*debts/debtors*)

All: 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.

**We believe that God is revealed in persons of all genders and sorts; we also honor tradition.

SENDING

***Hymn** O Little Town of Bethlehem NCH (black) #133

***Pastoral Benediction**

Choral Benediction Alleluia John Ferguson

Postlude Bring a Torch arr. Patricia Lou Harris

The Postlude ends our gathered worship and sends us into the world where our true service begins.
Feel free to let the music lead you out, or stay to listen, however the Spirit moves you.

Coffee Hour today is sponsored by Finance and Building & Grounds Committees.

Next week Coffee Hour will be hosted by Jim Preston and Edie Doherty.

Everyone is invited to bring a dish to share.

Keeping in Prayer:

Prayers for Alice Carey, friend of Alice O'Connor, who will be undergoing radiation therapy
Prayers for Kristin, friend of Alice O'Connor, who has recently been diagnosed with cancer
Prayers of healing for Beverly McClain, longtime friend of Eleanor Spencer
Prayers for Paulette Brace's son, Shawn Cassington, for ongoing medical issues
Prayers for Claire Pirnie, daughter of Diane Arsenault and Peter Pirnie and her son Micah as she continues through the process of divorce
Prayers for Tony Amodeo, friend of the LaPrads, who is undergoing cancer treatment
Prayers of comfort and strength for Ruth & Dale Mosher
Prayers for Sage Pirnie and her family, granddaughter of Diane Arsenault and Pete Pirnie
Prayers for Ellen who struggles with cancer, family member of Ruth & Dale Mosher
Prayers of healing for Sue Switaj
Prayers for our partner church in Zimbabwe, Masvingo UCCZ

If you have a prayer request please write on the yellow card in the pews and place it in the offering tray, or send an email to plymouthpastor@uccplymouth.org.

This Week and More at PCUCC

Today, December 24	7:00 pm Lessons & Carols Christmas Eve Service
Tuesday, December 26	7:00 pm AA Meeting
Wednesday, December 27	11:00 am Lectio Divina
Friday, December 29	8:00 pm AA Meeting
Friday, January 5	6:00 pm Coffee House: Elizabeth Brochu of CADY
Monday, January 8	10:00 am Book Group

CHURCH LIFE

Poinsettias: If you purchased a poinsettia, please consider leaving it for the evening service. If you need to take it to a loved one, please do so. Please do not take the white poinsettia or the poinsettias on the shelf.

Coffee House: Please join us for coffee, snacks, and an informal talk presented by Elizabeth Brochu of Plymouth's Communities for Alcohol- and Drug-free Youth (CADY) on Friday, January 5 at 6pm. Elizabeth will talk about what restorative justice looks like at CADY as well as all the wonderful things they do for our community. Bring a snack to share if you can! We understand that evening winter driving is not fun. Please email the office if you'd like to arrange to carpool: office@uccplymouth.org.

Book Group is reading The Exceptions: Nancy Hopkins, MIT, and the Fight for Women in Science by Kate Zernike during the month of January. Join the discussion on Monday January 8 and 22 at 10am. Contact Kathy Henning for more information: henkat52@gmail.com.

Lectio Divina: All are invited to gather Wednesday mornings from 11 a.m. to noon for a Bible study modeled on Lectio Divina, the sacred reading of scripture. We'll begin with the Gospel of Mark, the first gospel written, and read through it listening for God's Still Speaking voice. Please join us. Rebecca Larson will lead us.

Sunday School focuses on Bible lessons, outreach projects, and family activities. The children will learn how to use the gifts God gave them to positively impact their community. Volunteers are always welcome! Please contact Jennifer for more details at faithformation@uccplymouth.org.

FROM MISSION & OUTREACH

THE CHRISTMAS FUND for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund 9:30 am Sunday Worship, December 24

"Grace upon Grace." John 1:16

The Christmas Fund 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. United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you! Please make your check out to PCUCC, with "Christmas Fund" in the memo line.

Special Mission Offering: PEMI VALLEY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY 7:00 pm Sunday, December 24: Christmas Eve Worship Service

Seeking to put God's love into action, we bring people together to build homes, communities, and hope.

Pemi Valley Habitat for Humanity has been serving Plymouth and the surrounding area for 35 years and plans to continue its mission forever. We are a non-profit organization that partners with financial donors, local families, and community volunteers to build and sell affordable homes in 27 towns. Habitat homebuyers help build their own homes alongside volunteers and pay an affordable mortgage. Through our efforts, families have achieved the strength, stability, and independence needed to build a better life for themselves and their children. Please make your check out to PCUCC, with "Habitat" in the memo line.

Request from Pemi Valley Habitat for Humanity: Dale Mosher has asked if any church members or groups would be willing to bring a hot lunch for the volunteers working at 61 Pleasant St, Plymouth. The volunteers work on Thursday, Friday (max: 8 people), and Saturday (max: 4 people). Suggestions are a hearty soup, stew, pasta, chili, chicken pot pie... Lunch should be delivered between 12 and 12:30 p.m., along with paper plates, plastic utensils, and napkins. "Cooks" are welcome to stay for lunch with the crew. The students at Holderness Academy have volunteered to bring a hot lunch on Sat. Dec 9, and each Saturday in January. Please sign up by contacting Ruth Martz (ruthm.joy@gmail.com or 603-630-7936). Thank you!

FROM FINANCE

Support PCUCC with no cost to you! Purchase a **Hannaford Gift Card** in the amount of \$100, \$250, or \$500 by contacting Linda LaPrad or Ann Thurston. For every card purchased from the Finance Committee, the church receives 5% with no additional cost to you.

We will offer the option of meeting digitally indefinitely. You may also catch our services (one week delayed) on Sunday nights on PBTv at 7:00 pm. (Local channel 1302.) Please check Constant Contact and the Facebook page for ongoing updates.

Office Hours

Tuesday – Friday 9:00-2:00

If you have a family emergency and want to talk with a pastor, please call Rev. Ruth Martz at 603-630-7936 or you may call Eileen Torrey at 603-252-7513.

Alison Thatcher, Office Administrator	office@uccplymouth.org
David A. Williams, Director of Music	musicdirector@uccplymouth.org
Ashley Rose, Organist, Pianist	organist@uccplymouth.org
Jennifer Byam, Director of Faith Formation	faithformation@uccplymouth.org
Ann Thurston, Treasurer	treasurer@uccplymouth.org

Guest Preacher: Rev. Bill Torrey

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Celebrating Birthdays and Anniversaries in November in our Community

If you have an upcoming birthday or anniversary, please email office@uccplymouth.org

Tucker Magrath	December 9	David Williams	December 25
Eileen Torrey	December 15	Natalie Boyer	December 26
Frank Tedeschi	December 19	Robert Stewart	December 27

