

UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church Of Christ



Loving God. Loving Neighbor. Building Community.

December 7, 2025 Second Sunday of Advent
"One Christ, Many Cultures"

*Please rise in body or spirit.
You are invited to join in the liturgy **in bold type.**

*Childcare is available on the first floor
of this building for children ages 0-4.
Children K-5th grade are invited to
attend Sunday School after
Communion.*

*Please wear a name tag so we can
greet one another by name
(There are blank name tags in the
back of the sanctuary).*

PRELUDE – Every Valley Shall be Exalted *from* Messiah

G.F. Handel

*Every valley shall be exalted
And ev'ry mountain and hill made low
The crooked straight
And the rough places plain*
John David Whitener & 0 Jeremy Carlisle

WELCOME

Rev. Katrina Forman

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: The shadows linger around us,

All: And yet we are not alone.

One: In a world full of war,

All: We pray in anticipation of peace.

One: May Christ be born anew,

All: Not only here, but all around the world.

***HYMN – May Peace be In Your Hearts**

Ghanaian folk song

*May peace be in your hearts,
May peace be in your homes,
May peace be in your land,
May peace be in our world.*

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Grace Lawson & Sean Dolan

PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION (unison)

Rev. Leah McCullough

Merciful One, we see wars rage around the world and wonder how we could possibly stop them. And yet we know the ways in which we reject peace all the time. Our societal structures profit from war and division. Our communities are divided by power and privilege. Our families are fractured and estranged. And even our individual hearts struggle to create healing and reject hate. Sow in us the seeds of peace. Soften our hearts and widen our love. Amen.

MOMENT FOR SILENT REFLECTION

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

PASSING THE PEACE

COMMUNION

One: God be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to God.

One: Let us give thanks to God.

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Communion Prayer

Sharing of the Bread and Cup

You will be invited forward by the ushers to take a piece of gluten-free, nut-free bread and dip it in the cup of grape juice. You can also let them know if you wish to be served in your seat. All are welcome – and we mean it, no matter your age, membership, identity, or faith.

COMMUNION HYMN (insert) – *Eat This Bread*

Arr. Jacques Berthier

Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and
nev - er be hun - gry. Eat this bread,
drink this cup, trust in me and you will not thirst.

Prayer After Communion (unison)

God of both darkness and light, we have found you again at the table today. We pray that this holy meal fills us with hope for the days ahead as we keep watch for signs of your coming. May this meal connect us to the truth of *One Christ in Many Cultures* around the world. Amen.

(Children are invited to attend Sunday School at this time)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Vicki Paulson

Baruch 5:1-9

Luke 3:1-6

SERMON

Rev. Katrina Forman

***HYMN (Black Hymnal #101) – Comfort, Comfort O My People**

Words: Johannes Olearius

Music: Genevan Psalter

next page

Comfort, Comfort O My People

Isa. 40:1-8

Johannes Olearius, 1671

Transl. Catherine Winkworth, 1863; alt.

1 "Com - fort, com-fort O my peo - ple, tell of peace," thus says our God;
 2 For the her - ald's voice is call - ing in the des - ert far and near,
 3 Straight shall be what long was crook-ed, and the rough - er pla - ces plain!

Com-fort those whose hearts are shroud-ed, mourn-ing un - der sor-row's load.
 Bid-ding us to make re - pen - tance since the realm of God is here.
 Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, for Mes - si - ah's ho - ly reign.

Speak un - to Je - ru - sa - lem of the peace that waits for them;
 Oh, that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre-pare for God a way;
 For God's glo - ry ev - er-more shall be known o'er all the world;

Tell them that their sins I cov - er, and their war-fare now is o - ver.
 Let the val - leys rise in meet-ing and the hills bow down in greet - ing.
 And all flesh shall see the to - ken that God's word is nev - er bro - ken.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rev. Leah McCullough

Joys and Concerns

Josh Robeson
Leana Greene

Jonathan Grevatt
Joan and Bill Icklan

Musical Call to Prayer – Make of My Heart a Stable Amanda Udis-Kessler
*Make of my heart a stable, a house for the Holy,
A warm and sturdy place for peace to live and grow.*

Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer

Our {name for God}, 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERTORY

Invitation to the Christmas Offering

Lana Mustafa – Roots of Resilience

Music for Meditation

Jeremy Carlisle

***Response of Thanksgiving – Doxology for Advent**

VENI EMMANUEL

Words: Thomas Ken, adapt. William B. Abernathy

Music: Trad. French Tune

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God, all creatures here below.

Praise God for all that love has done.

Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

***Prayer of Dedication (unison)**

Holy God, you know where there is respect and care, there is possibility. Bless these gifts and use them to build a better world. Take our lives and use our money to build peace, to promote justice, and to hold space for all of your beloved children. Amen.

***HYMN (insert) – Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus**

HYFRYDOL

Words: Charles Wesley

Music: Rowland Pritchard



1 Come, thou long - ex - pect - ed Je - sus, born to set thy
2 Come, thou u - ni - ver - sal Sav - ior; come, re - deem the
3 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and



peo - ple free; from our fears and sins re - lease us,
hu - man race. Life and joy spring from thy fa - vor;
yet a king; born to reign in us for - ev - er,



let us find our rest in thee: Is - rael's strength and con - so -
cheer each soul in need of grace. Still we wait for thine ap -
now thy gra - cious king - dom bring. By thine own e - ter - nal



la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art; dear de - sire of
pear-ing—make our sense - less strug - gles cease. Guide us from our
Spir - it, rule in all our hearts a - lone. By thine all - suf -





***BENEDICTION**

Rev. Katrina Forman

***CHORAL BENEDICTION - Go in Peace, Beloved**

CRANHAM

Words: Anon.

Music: Gustav Holst

***Go in peace, Beloved. God be with you all.
Wait for grace with patience, as for rains that fall.
Go and share God's blessing. Be a sign of hope:
Bear the love of Jesus, love to one and all.***

POSTLUDE - Prelude on Forest Green (All Beautiful the March of Days)

Music: C. Staszkeski

Jeremy Carlisle

This liturgy was adapted from the work of by Rev. Amber Henry Neuroth, Rev. Holly Jackson and The UCC Movement for Palestinian Solidarity Liturgical Resources Team.

THANK YOU for joining us this morning. Please complete a welcome card if you are visiting and put it in the offering plate, or scan the QR code on the back of the pew.

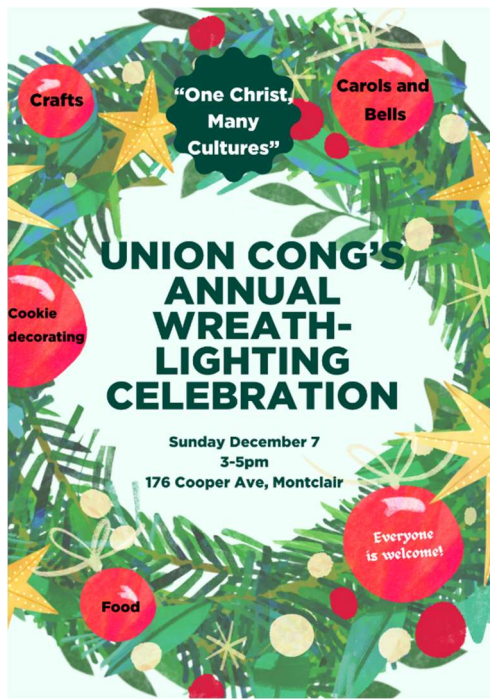
TODAY at 11:30am - Youth Group In The Guild Room

TODAY AT 3PM – JOIN US FOR THE ADVENT EVENT! (see next page)

THANK YOU to the Sunday Welcome Team, Communion Servers, and Sanctuary Choir! Thanks to Della Smith for the ceremonial loaf, and Michele Sionas for the gluten free/nut free bread.

LIVESTREAM VIDEO: Nkenge Jones

SOUND OPERATOR: Joe Cristiani



TODAY FROM 3PM-5PM

Union Cong's Annual Wreath Lighting Celebration (Assembly Room and Church Lawn)

Join us for a festive event to mark the Advent season. We will have crafts, cookie decorating, and snacks from Christmas traditions around the world. Our handbell choir will lead us in carols and interactive music games, before we hear a Christmas story and head outside to light the wreath on the church tower.

Tuesday, December 9

Daytime Bible Study is on Tuesday at 12:30pm in the Guild Room.

Wednesday, December 10

Chair Yoga is every Wednesday at 10:30am (Alternates Guild Room/Zoom)

Email Sara T. (sgtamargo@gmail.com) for location.

Handbell Rehearsal takes place every Wednesday at 7pm in the Sanctuary.

Friday, December 12

The Union Film Group will gather for a screening of "Red River" directed by Howard Hawks in the Guild Room

6:15pm BYO Dinner/7pm Screening. Noted as John Wayne's greatest performance and film. It was ranked the 5th Greatest Western by the American Film Institute.

Saturday, December 13th at 10am: The Women's Breakfast will meet at the historic Crane House.

On this Saturday, December 13, we will gather at 10am for a tour of the historic Crane House. The house will be decorated for Christmas by members of the Montclair Garden Club. The Crane House and Historic YWCA is a federal-style home located at 110 Orange Road in Montclair. It was built by Israel Crane in 1796 on Old Road (now Glen Ridge Avenue) in Cranetown, which is now the southern part of the Township of Montclair. We are asking for a donation of \$10 to go to the Montclair History Center. Volunteers from the history center will be our tour guides. We will meet at the back of the house (take the driveway between the Crane House and Clark House) at 10am. Parking is available. We are planning to gather after the tour

for lunch at the Pilgrim Diner, 82 Pompton Ave., Cedar Grove. Please RSVP to Karen Ermler, karen.ermler@gmail.com, if you plan to attend. Thanks!



On Saturday, December 13th at 7pm, the UCC Choir presents Forrest's "LUX: The Dawn From On High" in the Sanctuary. Experience the light of the holidays with the choir and orchestra. The concert is free, but donations are graciously accepted.

Sunday, December 14th after worship

Petting Zoo, Fair Trade Market, and Shared Coffee Hour with Grace Pres.

For our second year, we will share coffee hour with Grace Presbyterian and have the opportunity to visit with animals on the church lawn. After worship, remain with us and do a little Christmas shopping! Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans will be present, selling handmade, fair trade items to support their work. The Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans is a collective of over 60 artists working in the West Bank and Gaza. Their mission is to promote the principles of fair trade and serve as a vital link between Palestinian artisans and global fair-trade markets, ensuring ethical practices, cultural preservation, and economic empowerment.

Registration and Payment Deadlines For January Women's Retreat

The deadline to register and pay for the Women's Retreat is Sunday, December 21st. Go to www.unioncong.org/christian-education to register and pay. Questions? Reach out to Karen Ermler, Sara Olson, or Kim in the church office.

Donate Coats And Winter Wear At Union Congregational Church

Union Congregational Church is a community drop-off point for the Human Needs Pantry's Winter Coat Drive. There is a box on the Assembly Room porch where you drop off your coats and winter wear.

CHRISTMAS OFFERING 2025

We are celebrating Christmas traditions from around the world in our worship series, "One Christ, Many Cultures." In that spirit, we invite you to offer some tangible support to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank this Christmas as we pray for the fragile ceasefire to grow into a just, lasting peace. Our Christmas offering will go to Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, and to Roots of Resilience, a local organization which supports farmers in the West Bank.

Together, our gifts can be tangible expressions of our prayers for peace, hope, and dignity.

[Roots of Resilience](#) exists to foster mutual aid and solidarity with farmers in the West Bank. Their mission is to directly support Palestinian farmers, strengthen and preserve traditional food systems, and advocate for food sovereignty. Through educational programs both in the US and in Palestine, they aim to uplift communities by raising awareness and sharing stories that reflect the resilience, culture, and heritage of Palestinian agriculture. They work to sustain the land, the people, and the future of Palestinian farming and food traditions.

[Al Ahli Arab Hospital \(Ahli\)](#), in Gaza City (affiliated with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem) is a beacon of hope and healing in one of the world's most troubled areas. Ahli serves everyone regardless of religion, ethnicity, or ability to pay. Since the war began in October 2023, Ahli, the only Christian-led hospital in Gaza, has seen its capacity increase from 50 to as many as 250 beds to meet overwhelming medical needs.

Today, Ahli Hospital operates the only functioning ICU in Gaza with just three beds to serve more than half a million people. Despite these immense pressures, the hospital remains a lifeline for vulnerable populations. Even after the recent ceasefire, the hospital continues to care for 100-120 patients daily and performs roughly 1,000 surgeries each month, including orthopedic, plastic, vascular, and general surgeries. They continue to experience severe shortages of staff, medicine, equipment, and fuel, and need an average of \$1,800 a day just for the diesel fuel to run its generators.

You can donate to the Christmas Offering by using a Christmas Offering envelope in the pew, by using the donate/pay button on the church website, or scanning the QR code. If you donate online, be sure to select "Christmas Offering" as your donation's purpose.

Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
An LGBTQ+ Open and Affirming Congregation

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SCAN ME

