

2nd Sunday of Advent

December 7th, 2025 at 10:30am (Onsite & Online)



GATHERING

Welcome and a Time of Greeting

Rev. Tyler Ung

Candle Lighting*

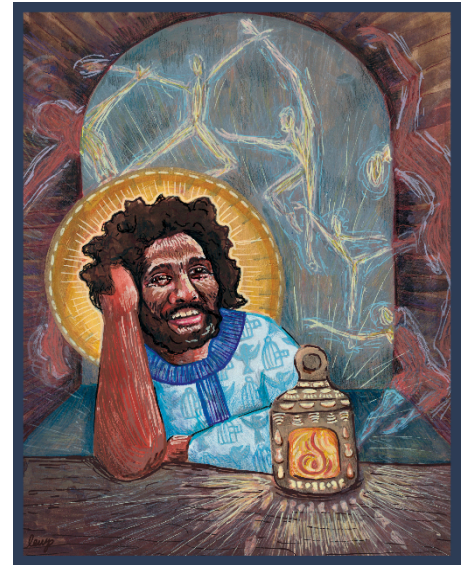
The Kandl Family

One: In a world full of fear, where do you see glimmers of peace?

Many: We see glimmers of peace in the quiet of early morning, when people shake hands, when loved ones say they're sorry and when the church sings together.

One: You are right. Even in a fearful world, peace is all around us. Today we light the candle of peace as a reminder of this good news. May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a fearful world, peace is present. We only have to look for it.

Many: Thanks be to God! Amen.



"Hope Like a Dancer"
by Lauren Wright Pittman

A Sanctified Art LLC
sanctifiedart.org

Invocation

Gwen Reagan

Meditation

What is hope? It is a presentiment that imagination is more real and reality less real than it looks. It is a hunch that the overwhelming brutality of facts that oppress and repress us is not the last word...that the frontiers of the possible are not determined by the limits of the actual.... Let us plant dates even though we who plant them will never eat them. We must live by the love of what we will never see...It is a struggled commitment to the future of our grandchildren....

–Adapted from *Tomorrow's Child*
by Rubem Alves

Prelude

David Wilson

Call to Worship

Rev. Tyler Ung

One: Beckoned to this place of belonging, we, of Umstead Park United Church of Christ, with body, mind, and spirit, gather to worship, serve, and proclaim God, unknowable mystery whose center is love, and Jesus the Christ, who makes this loving mystery known.

Many: With inarticulate words and unfinished lives, we yearn to further embody this holy love, shaping the future as partners with God, who dances and weeps with us along the way.

Anthem


"Peace, Peace"
(see insert)

UPUCC Choir


HEARING AND RESPONDING

A Time with Children

Rev. Tyler Ung



Je - sus, our bro - ther, kind and good, was hum - bly born in a sta - ble rude,
"I," said the don - key shag - gy and brown, "I car - ried your moth - er up - hill and down,



And the friend - ly beasts a - round him stood, Je - sus our bro - ther, kind and good.
I car - ried your mo - ther to Beth - le - hem town; "I," said the don - key shag - gy and brown.

Reading of Scripture

Matthew 11:1-5, from *The Inclusive Bible*
(see insert)

Gwen Reagan

Sermon

"When We're Running Out of Hope, God Is At Work"

Rev. Paula Womack

*Responsive Hymn

"Looking Out a Prison Window" (see insert)

Congregation

Prayers of the People

Rev. Tyler Ung



You are invited to share names or brief joys and concerns.
To submit written prayer requests for the weekly email, visit
tinyurl.com/upuccprayers, or scan the QR code to the left.

Celebration of Gifts (Offertory)

COMMUNION

Rev. Paula Womack

Remembering and Communion Liturgy

One: Come, you weary and restless; come, all who hunger and thirst.

Many: Jesus calls us to dine as friends. God's feast of welcome awaits us.

One: As we partake of this bread and cup we honor Creator and creation.

**Many: As we bless and share these gifts, we celebrate the table-fellowship of Jesus.
All are worthy, all are welcome!**

One: As we receive the fruits of Spirit, we celebrate the communion of all things.
Creator, Christ, and Spirit dance as one. So may it always be ... Come for all things
are ready.

At this time, you are invited to come forward. The bread may be dipped into the cup and then eaten. The cup contains juice. The center station contains gluten free bread.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Prayer That Jesus Taught

words adapted by Mark Miller from "The Lord's Prayer"

Our God, in heaven, holy is your name.

Your reign come, your will done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and help us forgive, as we have been forgiven.

In the time of trial lead us into light,

for yours is the kin-dom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SENDING INTO THE WORLD

*Sending Hymn

#131, "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"

Congregation

Announcements

Benediction

Rev. Paula Womack

Postlude

David Wilson

Supplemental Texts and Hymns

Choir Anthem

“Peace, Peace”

Text and Music by
Rick & Sylvia Powell

Peace, peace, peace on earth and goodwill to all.
This is the time for joy. This is the time for love.
Now let us all sing together of peace, peace, peace on earth.

Silent Night, Holy Night! All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon virgin, mother and child Holy infant, so tender and mild.
Sleep in heavenly peace. Sleep in heavenly peace.

Reading of Scripture

Matthew 11:1-5, from *The Inclusive Bible*

Gwen Reagan

¹ When Jesus had finished instructing the Twelve, he left the area to teach and preach in the outlying towns of the region. ² While John was in prison, he heard about the works the Messiah was performing, and sent a message by way of his disciples ³ to ask Jesus, “Are you ‘The One who is to come’ or do we look for another?” ⁴ In reply, Jesus said to them, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ ‘Those who are blind recover their sight; those who cannot walk are able to walk; those with leprosy are cured; those who are deaf hear; the dead are raised to life; and the anawim—the “have-nots”— have the Good News preached to them.’”

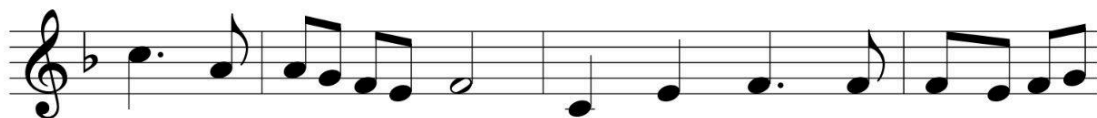
Responsive Hymn

“Looking Out a Prison Window”

Congregation



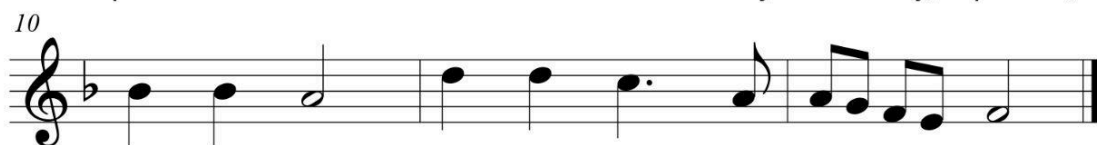
Look - ing out a pri - son win - dow, who can
All the things that keep us cap - tive shrink our
To our sib - lings still im - pris - oned be - hind
We are called to li - ber - a - tion, to be



see the flow - ers bloom? Hope dis - solves like dreams at
op - ti - mis - tic faith We must prac - tice hope on
bars of steel or fear Bring the mes - sage from our
freed and to set free Break - ing chains of world - ly



day - break leav - ing us an emp - ty room Still be - yond what
pur - pose e - ven when our spi - rits break 'Til at last our
Sav - ior: hope is real and dawn - ing near Tell the gos - pel
pow - ers who would claim our li - ber - ty Bo - dy, spi - rit,



we can see God is al - ways plant - ing seeds
free - dom comes And we fin - ally see the sun
all a - round New life springs up from the ground
mind and heart Li - ber - ate each cap - tive part

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John the Baptist was thrown in prison after publicly questioning the legality of Herod’s marriage (Matthew 14:3-5). He was not afraid to go toe-to-toe with the powerful, and perhaps he expected Jesus’ ministry to look more confrontational and politically strategic. In questioning Jesus, I wonder if John sought a particular answer to hang his hope on, that maybe the Messiah would be how he’d imagined him. Maybe Jesus would bust him out of jail and take things straight to Herod, but Jesus offers something else.

In this image, John sits in prison, letting the disciples’ testimony settle in. People with hearing, visual, and physical impairments experience new senses and mobility. Those with skin diseases are cleansed. Those with little material comfort are offered irrepressible hope, and the lungs of the dead are filled with the breath of life. I decided to image this good news through the dancing light of a lantern in John’s prison cell. I chose dancing figures because dancing feels like a primal response to the radical healing taking place outside the prison walls. As these six dancers illuminate the cell, I imagine John, even if for a moment, breaking into a bit of laughter at the magnitude of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus was quite literally doing the unimaginable. He was removing barriers so that the marginalized were no longer reduced to begging and sitting on mats, shoved to the edges of society. He was not only healing physical ailments; perhaps more importantly, he was restoring people to community.

Out of all the miraculous actions mentioned, the news did not include “release of the captives” (Luke 4:18-19).² With this message, John would know that he was not going to be freed,³ and so, the number of dancers would remain one short of seven.⁴ As we know all too well, God’s work isn’t completed in Jesus’ time. We are still woefully short of realizing the fullness of God’s desire for all of creation, and the work is ours to see through. Until then, let us keep our eyes peeled for the glimmers of hope dancing all around us and work toward a day when all can join in that dance of wholeness.

umstead park

UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

Church Staff

- Lindsay Cooper, she/her**
Nursery Director
- Rev. Tyler Ung, they/them**
Senior Pastor
- Gwen Vass, she/her**
Financial Administrator
- Cody Walter Welch, he/him/they/them**
Teaching Intern
- David Wilson, he/him**
Director of Music
- Rev. Paula Womack, she/her**
Associate Pastor

- A special “Thank You” to this week’s volunteers!**
- Nevin Fouts, AV Team
 - Scott Andrews (he/him), AV Team/Auditor
 - Rebecca van Dorsten (she/her), Coffee Set-Up
 - Lee Harrison (he/him), Assistant Treasurer
 - Bob Martin (he/him), Usher
 - Vickie Teal (she/her), Greeter
 - Gwen Reagan (she/her), Lay Leader
 - Alice Jermyn (she/her), Usher

QR Giving
Scan the QR code to make a one-time or recurring donation!

QR Visiting?
You are invited to fill out the online visitor form so that we can get to know you!

QR Realm
Access your Realm account



UPUCC Updates

Ornament Making! | Today at Noon

Come join the fun and fellowship as we make warm holiday memories – and a few simple ornaments. No special skills needed! Great both for families and solo acts! We will also have games available if that's more your speed!

We're Hiring!

Explore two part-time opportunities—Youth Director and Teaching Intern—in our vibrant, progressive faith community. We are thrilled to have Cody Walter Welch on staff as one teaching intern, and are looking to add to our team!

Ongoing Needs - Food Donations

Food donations are needed—and so are volunteers to deliver them! Bring meal-focused items on Sundays and let Jane Weidig know at womweid@gmail.com if you can help.

Help Host Healing Transitions on 1st Sundays

We host our friends from Healing Transitions on the first Sunday of every month. If you would like to get to know our neighbors through food, drink, and fellowship, check the upucc.org/news page to sign up!

Advent Devotionals | Season of Advent

Would you like to receive emailed devotionals during the season of advent? If so, you may find details for how to sign up on the “News” page of the website.

Longest Night Service | December 21 at 5:30pm

When the holidays feel heavy, join us for our Longest Night service—a gentle space for the grieving, the lonely, and the blue—Sunday, December 21 at 5:30pm.

Christmas Eve Service | December 24 at 6:00pm

We will hold our Christmas Eve service on Wednesday, December 24th at 6:00pm.

Christmas Breakfast and Worship | December 28

A gentle service for sharing breakfast and singing hymns, pajamas are warmly welcome. You can join us in making breakfast at 10:00am!

Learn more at upucc.org/news!