

# 3rd Sunday of Advent

December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 10:30am (Onsite & Online)



## GATHERING

Welcome and a Time of Greeting

Rev. Paula Womack

Candle Lighting<sup>†</sup>

Sarah Bellak

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

Many: **We see glimmers of joy in birthday candles and homemade cards. We see joy in the laughter of children and the delight of grandparents. We see joy in meals around the table and in the singing of Christmas songs.**

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

Many: **Thanks be to God! Amen.**



"Mary's Yes"

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

A Sanctified Art LLC  
sanctifiedart.org

A Story from our Children

UPUCC Children

Choir Anthem

"Advent Noel"

UPUCC Choir

Invocation

Jonathan McLean

## HEARING AND RESPONDING

Reading of Scripture

Luke 1:26-38, from *The Inclusive Bible*  
(see insert)

Jonathan McLean

Sermon

"Step One Is Enough"

Rev. Tyler Ung

Prayers of the People

Rev. Paula Womack



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

Celebration of Gifts (Offertory)

Rev. Paula Womack

## SENDING INTO THE WORLD

Reading an Excerpt of the UPUCC Covenant

Congregation

One: Beckoned to this place of belonging, we, of Umstead Park United Church of Christ...come together as travelers on a journey, each bringing our unique histories, traditions, and stories of faith, and we prayerfully establish the covenant, seeking...

Many: **A closer communion with God,  
A more intimate community with one another, and  
A committed, mutual relationship with the wider world.**

*continued next page...*

One: We cannot be sure where this commitment will lead, but this we know:

**Many: In our faithful sojourning  
We do not walk alone. God is present with us.  
We have not yet arrived. God continues to beckon.  
We seek no destination. The sacred journey is our home.**

## Welcoming a New Member

Alice Jermyn, Moderator

One: Sebastian Altman, as you join this community as an official covenant partner, do you promise to uphold this covenant?

**Many: I do.**

One: And do you, church family, promise to welcome and care for Sebastian, covenanting with him for the journey ahead?

**Many: We do!**

One: Let all the people say...

**Many: Amen!**

*~You may learn more about Sebastian in the Supplemental Texts section.~*

## \*Sending Hymn

#123, "Mary, Woman of the Promise"  
(verses 1-4)

Congregation

## Announcements

### \*Affirmation of Community

Sebastian Altman

One: We believe that all people are God's people, that every child is holy, that every person is a part of the sacred family.

**Many: We believe that God's love embraces all, and that to exclude any person would be contrary to the message of Jesus.**

One: We proclaim that this community of faith, Umstead Park UCC, will strive to be as open as the radical realm of God, and as liberating as the love of Christ.

**Many: And so we journey into our hopeful future with joy, pledging to offer each other welcome, compassion and care. May God grant us wisdom, grace, and guidance in our life together.**

### \*Benediction

Rev. Tyler Ung

### Postlude

David Wilson

# 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!

Reed Altman, AV Team

Peter van Dorsten (he/him), AV Team

Ada McKerrell, Coffee Set-Up

Dan Harrell, Assistant Treasurer/Usher

Tim Champion, Auditor

Vickie Teal (she/her), Greeter

Bob Martin (he/him), Usher



We at  
Umstead Park  
United Church of Christ  
welcome and affirm all  
as we journey to seek  
the divine, to embody loving  
community, and to strive for  
justice as a progressive  
community of  
faith.

## Giving

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

## Visiting?

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

## Realm

Access your  
Realm account

# Supplemental Texts and Hymns

## A Story from our Children

UPOCC Children

### Part 1: Mary and Joseph

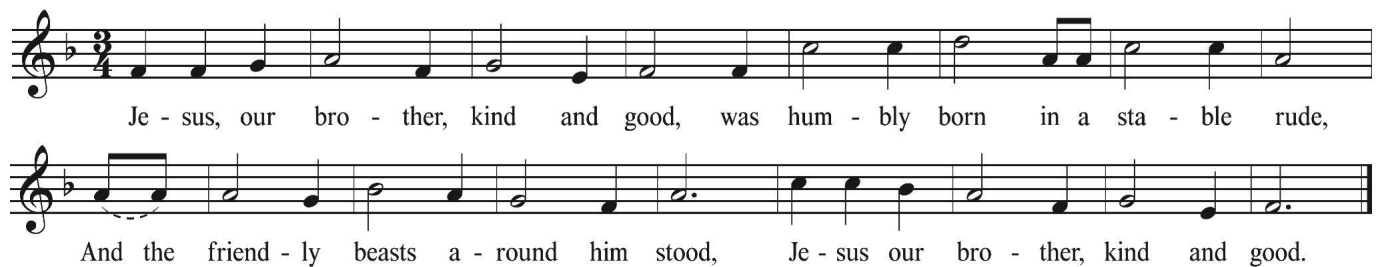
*"...Instead God gave light, and a love oh so great."*



Mar-y had a ba - by, — my Lord. Mar-y had a ba - by, — my Lord. Mar-y had a ba - by,  
Ma - ry had a ba - by, Mar - y had a ba - by, — my Lord.

### Part 2: The Animals

*"...God had been able to work a great miracle there in that stable."*



Je - sus, our bro - ther, kind and good, was hum - bly born in a sta - ble rude,  
And the friend - ly beasts a - round him stood, Je - sus our bro - ther, kind and good.

### Part 3: Angels

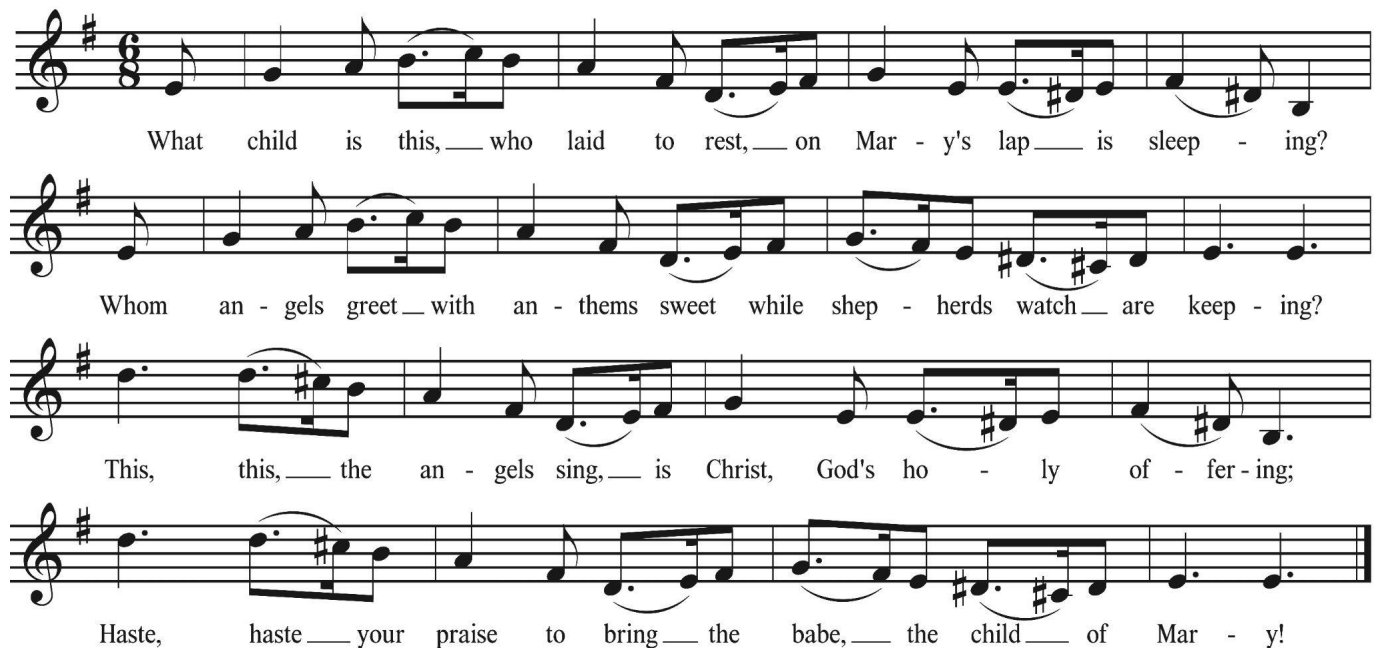
*"...And you'll find hope, joy, peace, and love are far-reaching."*



An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er all the earth;  
As you sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry, now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth;  
Come and wor - ship, come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, give thanks and sing.

### Part 4: Shepherd

*"...They knew he would help the whole world reconcile."*



What child is this, — who laid to rest, — on Mar - y's lap — is sleep - ing?  
Whom an - gels greet — with an - thems sweet while shep - herds watch — are keep - ing?  
This, this, — the an - gels sing, — is Christ, God's ho - ly of - fer - ing;  
Haste, haste — your praise to bring — the babe, — the child — of Mar - y!

### Part 5: Conclusion

*"Let us never forget how Christ taught us to live."*

See, the light is glowing in the eastern sky.  
See, the day is dawning, Christ is drawing nigh.  
Sing we noel, the King is born, noel!  
Sing we now, rejoicing, Christ is drawing nigh.

Prophets long foretold him, King of Israel,  
coming down from heaven on the earth to dwell.  
Sing we noel, the King is born, noel!  
Sing we now, rejoicing, Christ on earth to dwell.

Sing and shout the good news: God in heaven above  
comes to earth a savior with redeeming love.  
Sing we noel, the King is born, noel!  
Sing we noel, rejoice and sing noel!

Sing and shout with joy, the King is born, noel!

**Reading of Scripture**Luke 1:26-38, from *The Inclusive Bible*

Jonathan McLean

<sup>26</sup> Six months later, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a young woman named Mary; she was engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. <sup>28</sup> Upon arriving, the angel said to Mary, "Rejoice, highly favored one! God is with you! Blessed are you among women!"

<sup>29</sup> Mary was deeply troubled by these words and wondered what the angel's greeting meant. <sup>30</sup> The angel went on to say to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You'll conceive and bear a son, and give him the name Jesus—'Deliverance.' <sup>32</sup> His dignity will be great, and he will be called the Only Begotten of God. God will give Jesus the judgment seat of David, his ancestor, <sup>33</sup> to rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his reign will never end."

<sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have never been with a man?"

<sup>35</sup> The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you—hence the offspring to be born will be called the Holy One of God. <sup>36</sup> Know too that Elizabeth, your kinswoman, has conceived a child in her old age; she who was thought to be infertile is now in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> Nothing is impossible with God."

<sup>38</sup> Mary said, "I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say." With that, the angel left her.

**Getting to Know Our New Covenant Partner**

Sebastian Carlos Nations Altman (born 13th December, 2001) has been going to UPUCC all his life. A familiar face at UPUCC, he has been part of the youth group & become more involved with various church activities as the years have gone on. Now following his 24th birthday yesterday (December 13th) he has made the decision to join the church officially, noting the welcoming & loving environment the church has always embraced.



In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the angel goes to Nazareth to find Mary. I was six months pregnant with my second daughter when I reread this scripture and began this image, so at first, this detail seemed like a happy coincidence. But as I pondered it, I wondered if Elizabeth's pregnancy might have everything to do with Mary's willingness to say yes to this wild, wonderful—but risky and terrifying—undertaking.

Elizabeth's pregnancy provides reassurance that Mary can trust the angel's impossible news. By the sixth month, Mary will be able to see for herself that Elizabeth is truly pregnant. By the sixth month, Mary can place her hands on Elizabeth's belly and giggle as the baby leaps and kicks. By the sixth month, the risk of miscarriage has significantly decreased. By the sixth month, Elizabeth will be emotionally, mentally, and physically preparing for birth. Her miracle is real, even as it is yet to be born. Therefore, Mary can rest her hope in an emerging—not empty—promise.

Mary's willingness to say "yes" is also fortified by the assurance that she is not stepping forward alone. Even as fears surely surround her, Mary will go to Elizabeth for protection and comfort. She won't fulfill her calling without support. Her hope will be strengthened in solidarity.

In this image, we see the angel greeting Mary in the form of dappled light.<sup>6</sup> Mary's back is turned to the angel, but we see her in the process of pivoting toward the warmth of the cascading light. I imagine this is the moment after the angel responds to her initial question, "How can this be?" After hearing the angel's response, Mary closes her eyes, imagining her cousin Elizabeth and perhaps her many ancestors holding her up as she prepares to step forward. The wrap around her head carries the angel's good news, anointing her with the promise that fear won't stop her. Embroidered along her neckline is Mary's willing response: "Here I am." Her lantern earring is a sign to each of us, to anyone who is fearful. It's as if Mary herself becomes a lantern, emanating courage in the face of a fearful calling, lighting a way forward.

# UPUCC Updates

## **After Worship - Covenant Leadership Circle Meeting**

You are invited to attend the Covenant Leadership Circle (CLC) for their monthly meeting after church in the library. You may bring a bag lunch, or partake in some of the snacks we often have on hand. All are welcome.

## **Triangle Pride Band Concert | Tomorrow, Dec. 13th**

The Triangle Pride Band's Christmas concert is Saturday, December 13 at 7 PM at the Stewart Theatre at NC State. Come support a local LGBTQ+ nonprofit while enjoying a fun musical evening. Visit [upucc.org/news](http://upucc.org/news) for the link to buy tickets!

## **We met the goal for our IGHA Guatemigos**

Thanks to all who helped support Impact Global Health Alliance (formerly Curamericas), We met our goal and are currently in 6th place on the Mom-a-thon leader board!

## **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](mailto:womweid@gmail.com) if you can help.

## **Advent Resources | Season of Advent**

On Dec. 1st we sent out a number of resources for you to use this Advent. Among them are Advent Devotionals that follow our series, "What Do You Fear?" We are also including the pertinent devotional in each week's email.

## **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](http://upucc.org/news)!