

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
OF ST. CLAIR**



**“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you’re  
welcome here”**

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## WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD

December 15, 2024

Third Sunday of Advent

† Those who are able, please stand.

### CHIMES

*Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You*

### GATHERING HYMN

*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*  
*NCH144 vs 1, 2 & 3*

### WELCOME

Welcome to First Congregational Church of Saint Clair, United Church of Christ, where no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey you're welcome and loved here.

*In The Bleak Mid-Winter*  
*Chimes Choir*

### † CALLING ON GOD

Jovanna DiFiore

Leader: In the desert of life, prepare a pathway for God. In the wilderness, make a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; and the glory of God shall be revealed among us.

**People: God comes in the power of Love and Justice; therefore let us wait with eagerness and worship with JOY. Let the heavens be glad let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar and all that fills it. Shout for joy, all the earth!**

Leader: Emmanuel will Come, Come Emmanuel, Come!

### † HYMN

*Good Christian Friends*  
*NCH129 vs 1, 2 & 3*

### † OPENING PRAYER

Jovanna DiFiore

Leader: Creating and sustaining God, in your presence there is life. Living water springs up, and deserts blossom where you pass. Seeking the life that comes from you, we have gathered before you. Our hearts are ready, O God, our hearts are ready.

**People: Delight us with your presence, and prepare us for your service in the world; through the grace of Jesus Christ. AMEN!**

### PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION

Pastor Julia DiFiore

God, we confess that it is not easy to wait for you. Our world worships the power that acts quickly through force; how difficult it is for us to wait for the power of your rule which comes slowly through love. We admit, we leave little room for you

to act in our lives. We turn now to you in repentance and openness to your Spirit as we speak to you in the silence of our hearts.....

Thank you for hearing us Oh Lord with your Sacred Heart of Grace. We thank you that your desire and promise is our redemption, because you have overcome all sin that separates us from you. It is because of this promise, my church family, I am able to say, in the name of Jesus the Christ, our sins are forgiven!

**People: Amen, Hallelujah, Amen!**

**FIRST READING**

Psalm 96:11-13  
Jovanna DiFiore

**MUSICAL MEDITATION**  
Still, Still, Still – Chimes Choir

**SECOND READING**

Luke 2:10-11

Pastor Julia DiFiore

*It Came Upon A Midnight Clear*  
*Chimes Choir*

**SERMON**

Experiencing The Gift Of JOY  
Pastor Julia DiFiore

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH:** Tim and Karen G.

Leader: Soon we shall celebrate the birth of Jesus. We worship God with joy in our hearts as we are reminded of the words the angel said on that first Christmas Day: “Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people.”

We light this candle to proclaim the coming of the light of God into the world. With the coming of this light there is joy, JOY that is our not only at Christmas but always.

Light The Advent Candle by Mary Lu Walker

V1. Light the Advent candle, one:  
Now the waiting has begun;  
We have started on our way,  
Time to think of Christmas Day,

Refrain: Candle, candle, burning bright,  
Shining in the cold winter night;  
Candle, candle, burning bright,  
Fill our hearts with Christmas light.

V2. Light the Advent Candle, two:  
Think of humble Shepherds, who  
Filed with wonder at the sight  
of the child on Christmas night.

Refrain: Candle, candle, burning bright,  
Shining in the cold winter night;  
Candle, candle, burning bright,  
Fill our hearts with Christmas light.

V3. Light the Advent candle, three:  
Think of heavenly harmony;  
Angels singing “Peace on earth”  
At the blessed Savior’s birth.

Refrain: Candle, candle, burning bright,  
Shining in the cold winter night;  
Candle, candle, burning bright.  
Fill our hearts with Christmas light.

†HYMN

*O Come, All Ye Faithful*  
*W&R182 vs 1, 2 & 3*

## JOYS, CONCERNS, AND INVITATION TO PRAY

### THE LORD’S PRAYER

**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.**

**OFFERTORY:** *please place your offering in the box at the back table at your convenience upon entering or leaving. Or use the QR code on the pew by the envelopes.*

## PRAYER OF BLESSING FOR TITHES & OFFERINGS

†HYMN

*Joy To The World*  
*NCH132 vs 1 & 2*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Announcements are in the back of this bulletin.)

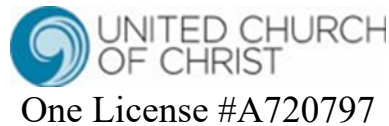
†**BENEDICTION** (*open hands*)

**ALL: Help us God to go forth into the world with footsteps of peace. To Be of good cheer, holding fast to that which is good. With your help Oh Lord, we will render to no one evil for evil. We will strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak, and help the afflicted. We will show your love to everyone. For we desire to serve you Lord, rejoicing in the power of Your Holy Spirit!**

Pastor: And the blessing of almighty God, the Creator, the Son, and Holy One, be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

†**POSTLUDE**

*My Hearts Sings Out With Joyful Praise*



**PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS...**

Diane Liebetreu and her family, David McCreary, Carol Carroll, Susan Couch, Bryce C. DeLand, Eric Fandrick, Matthew Pennewell, Emerson Stone, Ann Whittaker. Also, remember to pray for all who are serving in the military, first responders, medical personnel, and our elected officials.

**12/15/24 – TODAY’S WORSHIP ASSISTANTS**

SUNDAY STEWARD: Don O’Connor

SOUND AND LIVESTREAM: Tim Galvin, Jacie Sanders

MUSIC: Denise Gregg

USHERS: Randy Kling, Bob Rood

READER: Jovanna DiFiore

POWER POINT: Kathy Cilluffo

**12/22/24 – WORSHIP ASSISTANTS**

SUNDAY STEWARD: Don O’Connor

SOUND AND LIVESTREAM: Tim Galvin, Don Rice

MUSIC: Denise Gregg

USHERS: Jim Light, Jacie Sanders

READER: Pat O’Connor

POWER POINT: Jody Skonieczny

READER 12/24 – Jacie Sanders

## **OPEN AND AFFIRMING INCLUSIVE CHURCH COVENANT**

The members of the First Congregational Church of St. Clair, United Church of Christ, declare that we are a fully inclusive, Open and Affirming Congregation.

We affirm the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and believe that all people are children of God. As such, we welcome to the community of faith all people of diverse race, physical and mental abilities, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, and socio-economic status. We covenant to provide to all a safe, loving, nurturing and compassionate community.

## **~CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS~**

### **CURIOUS ABOUT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?**

Please let Pastor Julia know and she will ([pastorjuliad@gmail.com](mailto:pastorjuliad@gmail.com)) set up a time to chat. Your questions about the United Church of Christ and this church specifically will be answered.

### **BIBLE STUDY: Wednesdays 6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. ON HOLD UNTIL JANUARY**

Come learn more about Jesus, the Prince of Peace. What did Jesus say about peace? How can His way of nonviolence transform our daily lives and what is happening in the world? Come experience the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love of this Advent Season? Come and See what Jesus' Way has to offer.

### **ADVENT SERIES DURING THE WEDNESDAYS IN DECEMBER from 6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.**

December 11: The Faithful Nonviolence of Jesus: A New WAY to Peace

December 18: Finding JOY in Scripture and Song *NOTE: There will be optional Christmas caroling that will immediately follow. Concluding with snacks back at the church*

### **CHOIR**

Choir practice is on Thursday evenings from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to sing with us.

### **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Sunday school will be held the 2nd and 4th Sunday each month unless otherwise noted.

### **LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AVAILABLE**

We have several positions opening up on the Leadership Committee. If you are interested in applying for one of them, please see Jody Skonieczny. If you have questions, please reach out to Pat OConnor or to one of the other Leadership

Committee members. It's a wonderful way to become even more involved in the future of our church. The positions that are open are as follows:

Moderator Vice-Moderator  
Treasurer Member at Large

The only real requirements are that you be 18 and a member. The position will start in February after the annual meeting, so if you are interested in a position, but are not a member yet, you still have time to become one before February. Please consider!!

### **POINSETTIAS**

If anyone would like to make an offering to go towards the Christmas Poinsettias that will be decorating the altar during Advent, there are special Poinsettia envelopes on the table in the back of church. There is a place on the envelope to name the person(s) you are remembering or honoring. If you have any questions, please see Beverly Stewart or call her at 810-300-2664.

### **MISSIONS**

The Giving Tree is up! (In the Lounge) with tags for Christmas for our 5 children, from 4 Adopted Families. Please remember to sign up on the nearby white papers, corresponding to the number(s) of your tags. These gifts (wrapped, no bow please) need to be returned to church by December 11, to the marked shelves in the elevator room. They will be delivered by Karen and Tim Galvin and their delivery team. Many thanks for your loving Christmas spirit! Any questions, please call Cathy Light, 810-329-4875.

### **THE LITTLE RED FOOD PANTRY**

This small pantry is a community outreach program sponsored by The Mission Team of this church. It is stocked twice weekly with non-perishable food. Donation requests may change but the need to feed does not.

December is a gift  
In so many ways  
With family and friends  
To share the days

Remember December  
And remember this, too  
God's Son was born  
For me and you.

## **PANTRY NEEDS FOR DECEMBER**

Cereal  
Fruit  
Mac & Cheese  
Instant Mashed Potato Pouches  
Pasta with or without Meat  
Peanut Butter  
Spaghetti and Spaghetti Sauce  
(no glass, please)  
Hearty Soups – Crackers  
Canned Stew-Beef, Chicken Tuna, Vegetables  
Tea Bags

## **PANTRY EXTRAS FOR DECEMBER CHRISTMAS**

Christmas Dinner Side Dishes:  
Quick Bread Mixes  
Muffin Mixes  
Cake/Frosting Mixes  
Cookie Mixes  
Holiday Candy

Please leave food donations in the elevator room on one of the shelves labeled LITTLE RED FOOD PANTRY.

Any questions? Please call Nancy Kennedy (810-329-3790).

## **COFFEE HOUR**

There are several Sundays available to host coffee hour. Please be sure to check out the sign-up sheet on the back table of the sanctuary.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Do you have something you would like shared to our social media platforms? For any news, events, or stories you'd like to share with our community, please reach out to our Social Media Minister Karl Heilman in person, message our Facebook page or email him at [kheilman84@yahoo.com](mailto:kheilman84@yahoo.com).

Let's continue to spread God's love together! Feel free to like, share, and engage with our content as we strive to connect and uplift one another through the power of social media. Check out our Facebook page at [@First Congregational Church UCC of St. Clair](#) and our Instagram page at [@firstcong.churchofst.clair](#).



### **COMMUNITY BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE**

A community Blue Christmas service will be held at St. Peter's at 2 p.m., today.

### **HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS**

The office will be closed Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, as well as New Years Eve and New Years Day.