



Our world is reeling from prolonged uncertainty and instability brought on by the pandemic. Millions lost loved ones while others lost jobs and are affected by whether or not landlords will evict them from their homes for failure to pay rent. A staggering number of families are food insecure for the first time in their lives. And those who were already on the brink are even less sure how to survive. All are exhausted in some way.

As a church, we have problems to address. And so did the Holy Family on Christmas Eve. An oppressive regime had demanded everyone upend their lives and hightail it to their hometowns to register for the census. Mary was on the verge of giving birth. Whether they got to town late or for some other reason, they had a housing problem that night. The Innkeeper is often cast in a negative light, someone who banished a pregnant woman to where the animals were kept. But what if he was truly trying to be helpful to someone in need? Someone who saw a problem and thought, literally, “outside the box” to solve the problem of where Mary could have her child? Instead of thinking “there’s nowhere,” he said to himself first, “there has to be somewhere.”

As a church, we are called to ask these kinds of questions about how we can be light and help to our communities utilizing the resources that we have been given. The creation of the Community Outreach Task Force is one way that we have responded during the pandemic; other churches are seeking to transform their buildings and resources into solutions for various community needs and strengthen their own viability in the process. Some are offering affordable office space to non-profits that work to alleviate society’s problems, some are creating affordable housing, some after-school help, some food distribution. No one church can solve everything, but each one can do something. Just like the innkeeper.

As part of our CUC Advent and Christmas series we invite your engagement by:

- participating in four Sunday Advent worship services
- listening to engaging children’s stories that relate to our series each week during worship
- reflecting during a Blue Christmas service
- participating in or driving by to enjoy the return of CUC’s Live Nativity
- celebrating the birth of Christ during our Christmas Eve service



Read more information about each of the components of our “The Inn: Housing the Holy” series below; we hope you will join us on this journey of reinvention, hope, love, joy and peace!

Advent Worship Services

Our Sunday morning worship services take place in-person each Sunday at 10:00 am and are also live-streamed via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#). Following the live service, you are welcome to engage with a recording of the service at a time convenient for you and your loved ones via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#).

Advent 1 – Sunday, November 28 – *Making Room*

The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill my gracious promise with the people of Israel and Judah. In those days and at that time, I will raise up a righteous branch from David’s line, who will do what is just and right in the land. In those days, Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is what he will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness. - Jeremiah 33: 14-16

*Make your ways known to me, Lord; teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth—teach it to me— because you are the God who saves me.
I put my hope in you all day long. - Psalm 25: 4-5*

We usually associate fasting with Lent, but the Eastern Church observes a “Nativity Fast” in preparation for the birth of Christ, understanding fasting as a way to “make more room” for the Holy and shift our focus to care of the neighbor. In a time when so many are suffering the economic consequences of the pandemic, we are invited this year to create room for more hope in the world as we learn to reallocate and multiply resources in ways that are just and right.

Advent 2 – Sunday, December 5 – *A Place at the Table*

*Take off your mourning clothes and oppression, Jerusalem!
Dress yourself in the dignity of God’s glory forever.
Wrap the justice that comes from God around yourself like a robe.
Place the eternal one’s glory on your head like a crown.
God will show your brilliance everywhere under heaven.
God will give you this name by which to be called forever:
The Peace That Comes from Justice! The Honor That Comes from Reverence for God!
Get up, Jerusalem! Stand on the high place and look around to the east!
See your children gathered from the west to the east by the holy one’s word,
as they rejoice that God has remembered them. - Baruch 5: 1-5*

This is my prayer: that your love might become even more and more rich with knowledge and all kinds of insight. I pray this so that you will be able to decide what really matters and so you will be sincere and blameless on the day of Christ. I pray that you will then be filled with the fruit of righteousness, which comes from Jesus Christ, in order to give glory and praise to God. - Philippians 1:9-11

Like the childhood game of “musical chairs,” we are convinced that there are not enough places at the table. And so we shrink the guest list just in case there is not enough, and we scramble to occupy the chairs first. And yet our sacred texts invite us to imagine and make real the gathering of all people to the table, robed in the garments of a Peace that comes with justice. This is what really matters— this is the fruit of what is right and good.



Advent 3 – Sunday, December 12 – *How Much is Enough?*

*God is indeed my salvation; I will trust and won't be afraid.
Yah, the Lord, is my strength and my shield;
he has become my salvation."*

You will draw water with joy from the springs of salvation.

And you will say on that day:

*"Thank the Lord; call on God's name;
proclaim God's deeds among the peoples;
declare that God's name is exalted.*

Sing to the Lord, who has done glorious things; proclaim this throughout all the earth."

Shout and sing for joy, city of Zion, because the holy one of Israel is great among you. - Isaiah 12: 2-6

Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives. ..The crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" He answered, "Whoever has two shirts must share with the one who has none, and whoever has food must do the same." Even tax collectors came to be baptized. They said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He replied, "Collect no more than you are authorized to collect." Soldiers asked, "What about us? What should we do?" He answered, "Don't cheat or harass anyone, and be satisfied with your pay." - Luke 3: 10-14

As John baptized new converts, he invited them to live with "changed hearts and lives." When asked how to do that, his answers all point to making sure no one is cheated or left without the basic necessities of life, including the right to not be harassed. A full life of joy, which the prophet Isaiah describes as an ever-flowing spring, is the birthright of all children of God. May we act to make it so.

Advent 4 – Sunday, December 19 – *A Room with a View*

As for you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah, though you are the least significant of Judah's forces, one who is to be a ruler in Israel on my behalf will come out from you. His origin is from remote times, from ancient days. Therefore, he will give them up until the time when she who is in labor gives birth. The rest of his kin will return to the people of Israel. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. They will dwell secure, because he will surely become great throughout the earth; he will become one of peace. - Micah 5:2-5a

*Mary said, "With all my heart I glorify the Lord! In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.
He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.*

*Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored
because the mighty one has done great things for me.*

Holy is his name. He shows mercy to everyone, from one generation to the next, who honors him as God.

He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed.

He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, just as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever." - Luke 1: 46-55

This has been an Advent season of prophets: Jeremiah, Baruch, Isaiah, Micah. And now the prophet is Mary—the woman who was the original house for the holy. She was "the inn," her womb gestating love for the world. With all her heart, she proclaims that the lowly are lifted, the hungry are fed, mercy reigns. Like Mary, we must envision, must see, must prophesy and act on that vision for the world that God continues to call us to co-create. What is the view from the room that God has prepared?



Blue Christmas Service

Tuesday, December 21, 7:00 pm

Attend in-person or join us by live-stream via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#). Following the live service, you are welcome to engage with a recording of the service at a time convenient for you and your loved ones via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#).

People have undergone unprecedented loss during the last few years. Family and friends have died during the pandemic allowing for very little in-person mourning and support, millions have lost economic security through loss of jobs, some have lost businesses they built over a lifetime. Most of us have lost our beloved rhythms of life that felt familiar and gave our lives the richness of gatherings, friends, family and adventure. And we can name so many losses related to hatred and violence.

Throughout Advent we have proclaimed hope, love, joy, and peace in the midst of difficulty. This is the church's gift to the world—that our faith story is grounded in the presence of God that came and dwelt among us in the midst of hardship. But on the “longest night”—the Winter Solstice—it has become a tradition among some churches to hold a “Blue Christmas” or “Longest Night” service to acknowledge and remember those we have lost. It is important to name that sometimes hope, love, joy, and peace are distant feelings when we have encountered so much loss. The anticipation of renewed grief as Christmas Eve approaches can be difficult to bear for many. Ritual helps us move through these feelings and funnel our heartbreak in ways that, while not alleviating it totally, gives space for a tangible remembering.

On Tuesday, December 21 at 7:00 pm, the longest night of the year, we invite you to join us for service that will provide opportunity for reflection, calm, meditation, connection and hope during these challenging times.



Live Nativity

Saturday & Sunday, December 18 & 19, 6:00 – 8:00 pm

On December 18 and 19, Christ United Church will share a message of love and new beginnings to the community with a live outdoor Nativity. To make this event a success, we need the usual Mary, Joseph, Wise men or Wise women, and Shepherds. Two shifts are needed starting at 6:00 and continuing until 8:00 pm. Auditions are not required. Costumes will be provided. In the past, our cast has included members, relatives and friends. It is impossible to leave this event without having a closer understanding of that initial Nativity that happened over 2,000 years ago. Sign up lists will be available soon. We will also be looking for volunteers to provide cookies and hot chocolate. For questions, contact Rich Spinner.

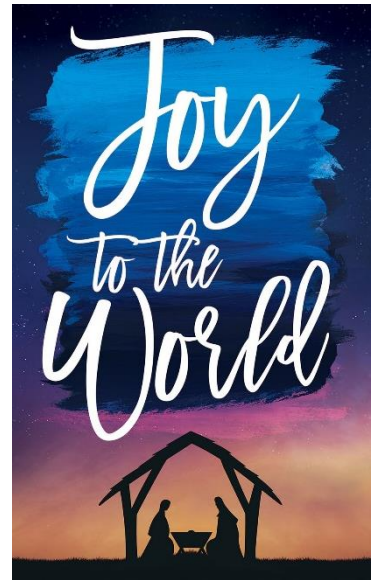


Christmas Eve Service

Christmas Eve, Friday, Dec. 24, 7:30 pm extended prelude; 8:00 pm service – The Inn

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined... For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. - Isaiah 9:2-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. - Luke 2: 1-7 [8-20]



The Inn is now open for business. The long-awaited Messiah has been born and on him the light shines. We have only to open the doors of our lives and to say “welcome.” Our Advent journey has led us to this moment when the light shining through a closed door becomes one opened to new possibilities, new relationships. What a poignant moment for us this year as the light—the hope, peace, joy and love—multiplies from one illuminated heart and hand to another.

We will offer an in-person Christmas Eve Service that will begin with an extended musical prelude beginning at 7:30 pm and service at 8:00 pm or join us by live-stream via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#). Following the live service, you are welcome to engage with a recording of the service at a time convenient for you and your loved ones via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#).

Sunday After Christmas

Sunday, December 26, 10:00 am – Dwelling

Our Sunday morning worship services take place in-person each Sunday at 10:00 am and are also live-streamed via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#). Following the live service, you are welcome to engage with a recording of the service at a time convenient for you and your loved ones via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#).

“You prepared this salvation in the presence of all peoples. It’s a light for revelation to the Gentiles and a glory for your people Israel.”

“For Zion’s sake I won’t keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I won’t sit still until her righteousness shines out like a light, and her salvation blazes like a torch.”

Luke 2: 31-32 and Isaiah 62: 1

The Good News that we have proclaimed for this Advent/Christmas season ends with a second chapter of Luke that starts, “When the time came...” Indeed, the time has come for us to move from the narrative of birthing to the narrative of redemption. The story of Jesus’ ritual cleansing as a child contains stories of people who had been waiting for this moment. But the time of waiting is over—for us too. Like Isaiah who says, “for Zion’s sake I won’t stay silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I won’t sit still,” we will not stop our songs of resistance until justice shines out like a light for all.

Advent & Christmas 2021

Full Schedule of the “The Inn – Housing the Holy” Series

Sunday, November 28, 10 am – Advent 1 – *Making Room*

In-person and live-streaming via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#)

Sunday, December 5, 10 am – Advent 2 – *A Place at the Table*

In-person and live-streaming via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#)

Sunday, December 12, 10 am – Advent 3 – *How Much is Enough?*

In-person and live-streaming via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#)

Saturday & Sunday, December 18 & 19, 6 - 8 pm – Live Nativity

Plan to participate or drive by the church to enjoy this annual display

Sunday, December 19, 10 am – Advent 4 – *A Room with a View*

In-person and live-streaming via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#)

Tuesday, December 21, 7 pm – Blue Christmas Service

In-person and live-streaming via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#)

Friday, December 24, 7:30 pm extended prelude; 8 pm service – Christmas Eve – The Inn

In-person and live-streaming via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#)

Sunday, December 26 – Sunday after Christmas – *Dwelling*

In-person and live-streaming via the [CUC Facebook page](#) or [CUC YouTube channel](#)

