

Central Congregational United Church of Christ

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT: HOPE

December 1, 2024

Ministers / **All of us**

Pastor / **Rev. Gage Church**

Worship Leader / **Becky Wedeking**

Music Director and Accompanist / **Linda Smith**

Song Leaders / **Gayle Hassler and Janice Ayers**

Prelude

"My Tribute"

Preparing for Worship

***Opening Hymn**

"Away in a Manger"

**Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus lay down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus, asleep in the hay.**

**The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes.
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,
and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.**

Continued on next page.

** indicates to rise in body or spirit.*

Bold indicates to speak or sing in unison.

**Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.**

Call to Worship

Sojourners of faith, today we begin the journey to Bethlehem,
to the city called “House of Bread.”

We take one step toward Christmas, the first step of many.

Let this journey transform us from beginning to end.

Whether your belly is full or empty, whether your heart is broken or whole,
look toward the manger, toward the stars over the city of David, and find hope.

**We look with hope because Christ is coming to fill hearts
and satisfy bellies with goodness and peace.**

Come, let us worship as we journey to the House of Bread,
where our brother and friend will be born.

Glory to God, there is hope today. Let us worship!

Greetings and Announcements

Passing the Peace

Prayer of Affirmation

Loving God,
we rehearse this beloved story, year after year,
because, in this world where people
are hungry and creation is suffering,
the story gives us hope — that all people
will be fed and creation will be restored!
We gather to worship in this season of hopeful expectation,
knowing you are faithful to meet us here
in song, prayer and scripture.
Nourish our hearts as we worship,
and prepare us to serve the hungry around us.
Amen.



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Lighting the Candle of Hope

Cindy and Linda Wilder-Towery

(The Advent candles stand for Hope, Peace, Love (all purple) and Joy (pink). The white candle is the Christ candle, which we light for the first time on Christmas Eve.)

*Congregational Hymn

“Arise, Your (Hope) Is Come”

Arise, your hope is come!

**The Spirit’s call obey;
show forth the glory of your God
which shines on you today!**

**Arise, your hope is come!
Fling wide the prison door;
proclaim the captive’s liberty,
good tidings to the poor.**

**Arise, your hope is come!
All you in sorrow born,
bind up the broken-hearted ones
and comfort those who mourn.**

Prayer of Confession

God who cares for every sparrow and every child,
we confess that the enormity of world hunger feels overwhelming.

We do not know what to do about famine and starvation,

**so we look away and distract ourselves
from suffering people and creatures, great and small.**

We confess that we neglect small acts of generosity
because the problems seem so big.

**We confess that we shrink back from true solutions
because the sacrifices seem too great.**

May your hope compel us to make choices
reflecting our love for our neighbors and creation.

You take our feeble efforts and magnify your glory.

May the world be fed with hope. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

The Readings

Luke 2:7

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 in the guest room.

Matthew 14:13-21

When Jesus heard about the beheading, he left Nazareth by boat and went to a deserted place to be alone. The crowds heard of this and followed him from their towns on foot. When Jesus disembarked and saw the vast throng, his heart was moved with pity, and he healed their sick.

As evening drew on, the disciples approached Jesus and said, “This is a deserted place and it is already late. Dismiss the crowds so they can go to the villages and buy some food for themselves.”

Jesus said to them: “There is no need for them to disperse. Give them something to eat yourselves.”

“We have nothing here,” they replied, “but five loaves and a couple of fish.”

“Bring them here,” Jesus said.

Then he ordered the crowds to sit on the grass. Taking the five loaves and two fish, Jesus looked up to heaven, blessed the food, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, who in turn gave it to the people. All those present ate their fill. The fragments remaining, when gathered up, filled twelve baskets. About five thousand families were fed.

Special Music

“Simple Gifts”

Linda Smith, Gayle Hassler and Janice Ayers

Message

“Famished”

Rev. Gage Church

*Congregational Hymn

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

**In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.**

**Our God transcends all heaven, earth, and its domain;
heaven and earth shall flee away when Christ comes to reign;
in the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
the sovereign God almighty, Jesus Christ.**

**Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim thronged the midnight air;
but his mother only, in her maiden bliss,
worshiped the beloved with a kiss.**

Joys and Concerns

We respond with “Lord, hear our prayer.”

Time of Silence

Pastoral Prayer

The Prayer of Jesus

Please pray any version you wish. Here is one version:

**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, the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

Offering

We are “centralchurchtopeka” on Venmo.

A note to visitors: Your presence with us this morning is a gift in itself.

*Doxology

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. Amen.

*Prayer of Dedication

Generous God, these gifts and offerings are a tangible expression
 of our hope in Christ. May they nourish those who hunger
 and spread your love and justice. Bless our giving, inspire us
 to share with compassion, and help us trust
 in your abundant provision. Amen.

Holy Communion

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious God, in this holy moment of communion,
 you have fed us with the bread of life and the cup of blessing.
 May the nourishment we have received sustain us
 as we journey forth in hope and faith.
 We thank you for the mystery of Christ's presence among us,
 born in Bethlehem, the "House of Bread." Amen.

Affirmation of Hope

Like the pleasing aroma of a hot meal as it is placed on a table of fellowship,
we believe hope entices the people of God to come together in unity.
 Like the dreams of harvest that inspire the farmer to plant seeds in the spring,
we believe hope emboldens us to plan and plant for the future.
 Like the insects who collect pollen and unknowingly fertilize the food for all creation,
**we believe hope empowers us to follow our calling, allowing God
 to multiply our efforts when we are following our calling.**
 Like the instinct of animals who store and save for hard times ahead,
we believe hope persuades us to anticipate and endure challenges that will arise.
 And when anxieties and circumstances overwhelm us,
 or we are tempted to fall into despair,
we believe things can get better with compassion and imagination.
This is hope. Amen.

*Closing Hymn

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

**O come, O come Emmanuel,
make true the stories prophets tell —
so all those chained by fear find release,
and, war forgotten, bring a world of peace.**

**Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
is come to birth where all God's children dwell.**

**O Come, Love's season, to our lonely days,
and guide us in our words and ways
to be the ones whose Advent begins
with healing earth and all that live within.**

**Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
is come to birth where all God's children dwell.**

**O come, Desire of Nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind;
make envy, strife and quarrels cease;
fill the whole world with heaven's peace.**

**Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
is come to birth where all God's children dwell.**

*Benediction

Postlude

“Amen”

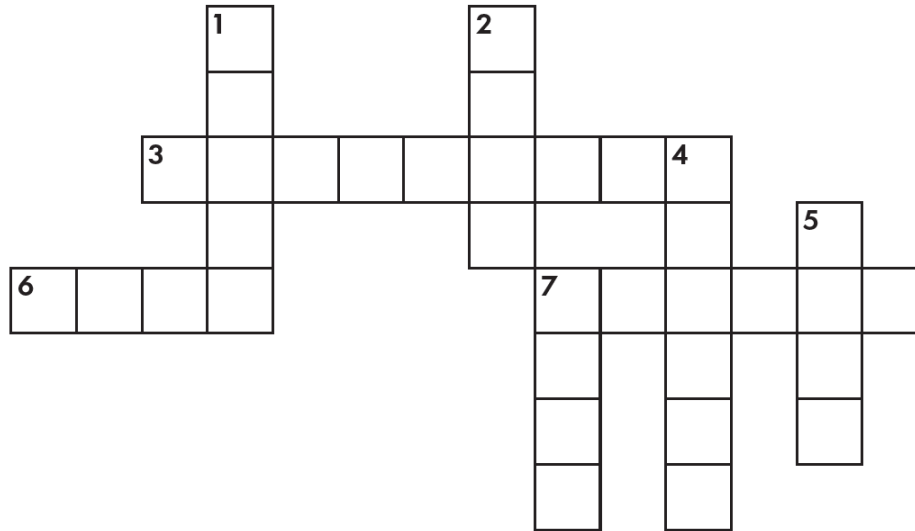


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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Jesus was born to provide hope and food is foundational to that hope! Read the clues below to solve the crossword puzzle connecting food and the hope Jesus brought. If you get stuck, feel free to ask a neighbor!



ACROSS

3. "House of Bread"
6. Nutritious substance our bodies depend on
7. An empty, hollow feeling in our bellies

DOWN

1. Starchy food that can be used for sandwiches
2. Opposite of want
4. Where animals find their food
5. Multiple food items consumed at once
7. Believing things can get better with compassion and imagination

WORDS to CARRY

Write down three words from today's service on **hope** that you will carry with you this week.



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