

UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE
A United Church of Christ

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 22, 2024
10:00 A.M.

For Reflection

Lord Jesus, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.
We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.
We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.
To you we say, "Come, Lord Jesus!" Amen.

Fr. Henri Nouwen, Dutch Catholic Priest, Prof. of Pastoral Theology, Yale Divinity School

WE GATHER

(May the first note of the Prelude be a call to prayer and stillness as we prepare for worship.)

Prelude

The First Noel

Traditional/arr. Danny Calhoun

*Congregational Introit

Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus

Stuttgart

**Please rise in body or in spirit.*

***Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free,
From our fears and sins release us, set our hearts at liberty.***

***All our strength and consolation, hope to all the earth impart;
Dear desire of every nation, enter every longing heart.***

Welcome and Sharing of Life and Ministry

Breathing in God's Gifts of Peace, Hope, Joy, and Love

*Sharing God's Gifts and Regathering in Song

*(Please rise and offer to your neighbors around you "Blessings for this Blessed Season."
We regather with the conclusion of "Come, O Long-expected Jesus.")*

***Born all people to deliver, born a child, you came to reign.
Born to rule on earth forever, come, be known to us again.***

Welcoming of Visitors and Breathing in God's Gifts Again

Musical Call to Worship

The King Shall Come

John Brownlie/Consolation

The Call to Worship from the Song of Zechariah (the father of John the Baptizer)

Blessed be the Lord God of all nations! For God has turned to the people, saved them and set them free.
Age to age, God proclaimed through the prophets to deliver us from our enemies,
to show the mercy promised to our fathers and mothers, and to remember the holy covenant.

;Oh ven! ;Oh ven, Emanuel!

Go before the Lord to prepare the way, to give knowledge of salvation to all people
in the forgiveness of their sins.

;Oh ven! ;Oh ven, Emanuel!

For in the tender compassion of our God, the morning sun will rise upon us,
to shine on those who live in the shadows, under the cloud of death,
and to guide our feet in the way of peace.

;Oh ven! ;Oh ven, Emanuel!

*Advent Carol

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Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn (1-2)

Marty Haugen

WE LIGHT A CANDLE

The Litany for the Fourth Advent Candle

Why is today different from all other days?

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent, and the day we light the fourth candle on the Advent Wreath.

Why is this candle different from the other candles?

The Fourth Candle is the Candle of Love. When Christ was born, it was a time of oppression and hatred among peoples of different races, religions, and nationalities—perhaps not unlike our time. Yet to the manger in Bethlehem came people from all backgrounds—Hebrew shepherds and wise ones from the Far East, a poor peasant girl and a carpenter named Joseph—all called by God’s love.

What does the fourth candle mean?

It reminds us that God’s light and love came into our world in the flesh. “Unto us a child is born,” proclaimed Isaiah, “Unto us a son is given.” Through his birth and his life, Jesus Christ showed God’s love so all people could see it.

Like the candles of peace, hope, and joy, the candle of love must brave great darkness.

Today when our world is troubled by fear and violence, we kindle a light called love for all to see.

(The lighting of the Candle of Love.)

Stir up your power and come, O Lord.

**Come to bring love to your people.
Come to bring love to our world.
Come to bring true love into our lives.**

Stir up your power and come, O Lord.

**Come to remove repression.
Come to conquer selfishness.
Come to bring justice for the poor and mercy for the suffering.**

Stir up your power and come, O Lord.

**Come so your word of love will become flesh in all life.
Come so your love might be born in our world.
Come so your love would transform our lives. Amen.**

*Advent Carol

107

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn (3-4)

Marty Haugen

(Children and younger youth are invited to Children’s and Youth Ministry with Maria Navarette and Destiny Muñoz.)

WE LISTEN AND ENGAGE

The Story of Mary

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The woman’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Child of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his realm there will be no end.” Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am unmarried?”

The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy and called the Child of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”

A Carol

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Mary, Woman of the Promise (1-3)

Quem Pastores

The Sermon

Isn't It a Little Late?

Silence

A Musical Response

Then We Shall Sing for Joy

Bradley Ellingboe

WE RESPOND

Offering Ourselves in Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

(Please use a version of the Lord's Prayer familiar to you.)

Presenting Our Gifts 128 ***In the Bleak Midwinter*** *(choir only, st. 3)* Christina Rossetti/Cranham
(Today's offering helps underwrite United's support of our community partners such as Santa Fe's Shelters and other agencies, along with the national ministries of the United Church of Christ.)

WE GO IN PEACE

*Hymn 125 ***Angels We Have Heard on High*** (1-2) French Carol
*Benediction
*Musical Benediction 125 ***Angels We Have Heard on High*** (3-4) French Carol

Soli Deo Gloria—To God Alone the Glory!

WELCOME TO THE UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE!

We're glad you've joined us for worship and hope you'll stay for fellowship time afterward. If you're visiting, please take a moment to sign the guest register by the front door. Again, welcome!

Sharing leadership in this morning's service are the Rev. Talitha Arnold, Senior Pastor; Bradley Ellingboe, Director of Music; the Sanctuary Choir; soloists Steven Kerchoff and Quiara Cortez; Jessica Smucker, violin; and Liturgists Phil, Sasha, and Jack Smucker. The Hubley Family (Stephanie, Tina, and grandparents Alison and Adam) lit the Advent Candle. You were greeted by Barbara Christiano, Blanca Surgeon, Bina Surgeon, Pam Hyde, Karen Wilbanks, and Sunday Aide Luis Zapata.

We are also delighted to welcome Michelle Schumann as United's new Pianist. A native of Canada, Michelle and her family moved to Santa Fe last summer from Austin (TX) where she was the Artistic Director for the Austin Chamber Music Center and the founder and Artistic Director for the Hillman Visiting Artist Series. Michelle has been the pianist for several churches, as well as being the Collaborative Pianist with many well-known musicians, including composer and conductor Craig Hella Johnson and cellist Gregory Sauer. Please take time to extend your welcome and blessing.

Children and younger youth begin the service with the congregation, then go to Children's Ministry during the Advent Candle carol. With Maria Navarette and Destiny Muñoz, they'll find **their** place in the Nativity story.

LAST DAY FOR COMPASSIONATE CHRISTMAS GIFTS!

Do your last-minute Christmas shopping here at United's "Compassionate Christmas Gift Market. Give gifts that offer love and care to your loved ones – and to our neighbors in need around Santa Fe and around the world.

Christmas Eve is Tuesday!

- **3:00 pm: Farolito Set-up:** Join us Tuesday afternoon to place dozens of farolitos all around the church. Many hands make light work! Please bring long grill lighters.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

Whose Birthday Is It Anyway?

- **Candles & Carols Service (5:00 pm):** Designed for families with children, but all welcome! Carols, a Christmas story, a gift for every child, and the Candle-lighting Service. (Infant and toddler childcare.)
- **Candlelight Service (7:00 pm):** Carols, candle-lighting, the Christmas Festival Choir, and a message of hope. (Childcare and a gift for every child and youth.)

First Sunday of Christmastide (Next Sunday, Dec. 29)

(one service only at 10:00 am)

We also celebrate the baptism of Jan and Kitty Jansen's grandson, Lucas Bromfield, and also welcome his family from Holland and Texas.

COMING UP IN THE NEW YEAR!

Follow the Star (and the Donkey, the Cat, the Dove, etc.)

Sunday, Jan. 5 – Epiphany Sunday

Lots of travelers had a hard time that first Christmas. Joseph and Mary ended up in Bethlehem with no place to stay. The shepherds needed an angel chorus to show them the way. The Wise Ones got off-track and ended up in King Herod's court. Luckily, lots of God's creatures were around to help! On Epiphany Sunday (Jan. 5), a Readers' Theater of United children, youth, and adults offer the Epiphany story in a whole new way. A good Sunday to invite friends—of all ages!

Adult Forums:

Reading Bonhoeffer in America 2025 – Sunday, Jan. 12 (11:15 am)

Professor Emeritus of Social Ethics, Larry Rasmussen is also a leading scholar in the witness and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian and pastor who was part of the Resistance movement against the Nazis and who paid for his actions with his life. This winter, Larry will lead a course on "Reading Bonhoeffer in America 2025," based on an essay Bonhoeffer wrote as a Christmas gift to his co-conspirators and his family, four months before his arrest by the Gestapo. He focused on what the resisters and their supporters had learned in fighting fascism for ten years and what the experience has told them about their people and themselves.

The Forum series starts Sunday, Jan. 12, with a documentary about Bonhoeffer's life and work, followed by a light lunch and discussion. Subsequent forums will focus on the essay. To help us plan, please sign up in the Community Room.

Somos Un Pueblo Unido

Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday – Jan. 19 (11:15 am)

United's Immigration and Refugee Task Force hosts a speaker from *Somos Un Pueblo Unido*, a Santa Fe-based immigrant rights organization, for up to date information on the situation immigrants and refugees in our community face in the new administration—and how we can respond, individually and as a church.

Newcomers' Breakfast – Sunday, Jan. 19 (11:15 am)

Like to learn more about the United Church of Santa Fe? Come to the Newcomers Breakfast 9:45 on Sunday, Jan. 19. Attending an orientation isn't a commitment to join, but an opportunity to learn more about the church. Please RSVP in the Community Room or call the office (988-3295).

FebFest Choral Workshop and Concert of African American Sacred Music

Saturday, Feb. 8, 2025 – United Church

(Workshop: 8:30 am to 4:00 pm, with Concert at 4:30 pm)

United's Festival Choir and *Coro Lux* (both directed by Bradley Ellingboe) present FebFest 2025 with special guest, Dr. Brandon Boyd, in a Saturday workshop (Feb. 8) followed by a free concert that afternoon here at United. A free-will offering for the concert benefits the new Santa Fe Symphony Children's and Youth Choirs and also the UNM Gospel Choir, "Fervent Praise." To register for the choral workshop, go to abqcorolux.org.

THANK YOU FOR 'BEING A BLESSING!'

- We've received 150 pledges, totaling almost \$503,000 with 19 new pledges! Our goal is \$560,000. Your pledge counts!
- **If you haven't had a chance to pledge yet, we invite you to join in.** Pledge cards and envelopes are in the Community Room.
- Please continue to hold United Church and the Campaign leaders **in prayer** as we move ahead. Most of all, take time each day to **remember** all the ways God has blessed your life and be open to the ways you can share those blessings with others.

Year-End Giving

To claim a charitable deduction for 2024, checks, gifts, or online donations must be received or postmarked by Dec. 31, 2024. Checks received after Dec. 31 can't qualify for a charitable deduction for 2024, even if predated 2024. (Sorry!) You can also visit unitedchurchofsantafe.org and click on the "donate now" button to contribute online. Many thanks!

United Church of Christ Christmas Fund

Because many United Church of Christ retirees faithfully served low-income inner-city or rural congregations and/or communities of color, their pensions are very low. The UCC Christmas Fund provides emergency grants, supplemental annuities, health insurance, and Christmas "Thank You" checks for clergy and lay worker retirees in need. With inflation, that need is greater than ever. To donate, go to unitedchurchofsantafe.org (Donate Now) or send a check to United Church of Santa Fe (memo "Christmas Fund").