



Welcome to Worship!

Sunday, December 14, 2025
Third Sunday of Advent: Lighting the Candle of Joy
Worship Theme: Building Community

***Please stand as you are able.**

PRELUDE

I Wonder as I Wander arr. by D.E. Wagner
Piano/Organ Duet; Lisa Hamilton and Marilyn Tice

WELCOME

Pastor Karen Evenson

*CALL TO WORSHIP

One: We gather together in this place:

All: prophets and dreamers, singers and poets,

One: we who dare to imagine a world renewed;

All: we who dare to dream God's dream.

One: We sing with Elizabeth and Mary.

All: Our spirits rejoice in God, our savior!

One: We bless the God of justice and joy,

All: who lifts up the lowly and vulnerable.

One: God's mercy is upon us all,

All: from generation to generation.

One: Come and worship, all you who dream and wait.

All: We have come to wonder and praise.

*HYMN

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus (UMH 196 v 1)

OPENING PRAYER

God of surprises, you interrupt our world with joy and hope beyond our wildest dreams. When we feel forgotten or despair, bless us with your holy joy. When our world feels barren, bless us with the gift of possibility. We pray as people of deep faith, entrusting ourselves and our world to the holy unknown, brought to birth in Jesus, our light and life. Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

KIDS MESSAGE *(Kids of all ages are invited to come up front for a kid-friendly message)*

SPECIAL MUSIC *O Holy Night* by Placide Cappeau & John S. Dwight
Kelvin Paye and Steve Moen, UMCA Praise Team

MOMENT TO SHARE THE STORY

PASTORAL PRAYER AND PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

***HYMN** *My Soul Gives Glory to My God* (UMH 198 v 1, 2, 3, 5)

SCRIPTURE READING **Luke 1:39-55** (NRSVUE)

MESSAGE ***“Unexpected Joy”***
Pastor Karen Evenson

OFFERING *Make Room* by Casting Crowns
Kelvin Paye and Steve Moen, UMCA Praise Team

***DOXOLOGY** *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow* (UMH 94)

THE LORD’S PRAYER

***HYMN** *Toda la Tierra (All Earth is Waiting)* (UMH 210 v. 1, 2, 3)

PASSING PEACE TO ALL OF GOD’S PEOPLE

From one to another, “May God’s peace be with you (and also with you).”

*BLESSING AND BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Salute The Happy Morn* arr. by R. Hughes

December 21, 2025
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Luke 1:57-80
“Merciful Love”
Message by Pastor Karen Evenson

Worship Hospitality Team

Building Opener and Closer ~ Adam Breiner and Dave Panter
Choral Conductor ~ George Chu
Coffee/Donut Steward ~ Margaret Ekstrum and Rachel Ridens
Congregational Care Coordinator ~ Sue Buckland
Greeters ~ Angela and Dave Panter
Liturgist ~ Don Menter
Music Ensembles ~ *To be prayerfully determined*
Nursery Coordinator and Volunteer ~ Amanda Harris and Sarah Dhein
Organist ~ Marilyn Tice
Pastor ~ Rev. Karen Evenson
Praise Team Coordinator ~ Kelvin Paye
Scripture Reader ~ Don Menter
Snow Removal and Salting ~ Ian Wallin and Scott Evenson
Sunday School Leader and Assistant ~ Heidi Moen and Ian Wallin
Ushers ~ David Blincow, Gail Sanstad, Ian Wallin,
Joyce Buffington, Roxy Crane, and Mark Worst
Welcome Center ~ Bev and Dean Summerbell
Worship Tech ~ Dallas Berry

WEEKLY SCHEDULE:

UMCA Office Hours: 9:00am - 3:00pm ~ Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

Or by appointment, please contact us at:

Phone: 763-421-2378 | Email: umcanoka@gmail.com

Monday, December 15, 2025

6:00pm Grief Group

Tuesday, December 16, 2025

11:00am Vernetta Houle Service
10:00am Visitation; Luncheon to follow
1:00pm Card Games in Room 209
7:00pm Praise Team Rehearsal

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

9:00am Sewing and Quilting Group
6:00pm Youth Group
7:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, December 18, 2025

8:00am Thursday Book Group at Bakers Square
9:30am Bring Your Bible ~ In-Person & Zoom

Friday, December 19, 2025

10:00am Men's Breakfast at Pappy's Cafe

Sunday, December 21, 2025

SUNDAY SERVICE

9:30am Worship (In-Person & Online)
9:45am Sunday School
10:45am Advent Class
12:30pm Confirmation
1:00pm Blue Christmas

DECEMBER

Ministry Highlight of the Month



**United For The Community:
EASTER “Resurrection & New Life”**

**We will be inviting our neighbors to an
Easter Community Event in March/April of 2026.**

Easter is April 5, 2026

WORSHIP NOTES:

**Scan QR Code to connect to our website for more information on
the church, to donate, or view our weekly bulletin:**



Scripture: Luke 1:39-55 & Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Character Spotlight: Elizabeth

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

Joy, in the context of Advent, is not escapism, pleasantry, or emotional detachment. It is prophetic defiance. We've inherited the false story that joy only belongs to those with comfort, status, or certainty. But in this week's story, Elizabeth and Mary disrupt that narrative. Though Elizabeth remained childless into old age and Mary is unexpectedly pregnant in circumstances considered scandalous at the time, both women trust that God is near. Elizabeth names Mary's faith as blessed. Mary sings of reversal and uprising. Together, they proclaim joy—not as avoidance of pain, but as the response of a people who know God dwells with the lowly. They name what's wrong. They bless what's growing. They rejoice as an act of resistance.

Mary's *Magnificat* takes resistance further, exposing the systems that exploit the poor and hoard wealth. Her words echo Isaiah's: joy is for the brokenhearted, the captives, the mourners. This is not sentimental hope—it is revolutionary poetry. Mary's imagination declares that God has already scattered the proud, filled the hungry, and lifted the humble. But her song also holds lament: it reveals how far we still are from that world. And still, she sings. Her joy is not a feeling—it is faith made visible. It is the choice to celebrate what God is birthing in spite of empire. We are invited to join them—to create joy rooted in justice, shared witness, and sacred disruption.



CHARACTER SPOTLIGHT

While the text affirms her righteousness, Elizabeth lived with barrenness and aging in a culture that misunderstood them. She had every reason to believe the false stories of her time: that her worth was tied to childbearing, and that silence was safer than witness. But she resists those lies. When Mary arrives, Elizabeth's is the first prophetic voice to affirm the sacredness of Mary's calling—not by status or success, but by trust and blessing. Her greeting is not small talk—it is sacred proclamation. "Blessed are you among women," she exclaims, filled with the Holy Spirit. In a world that mocks the hopeful and silences women's voices, Elizabeth speaks anyway. She sees, she names, she blesses.

This moment between Mary and Elizabeth is thick with prophetic imagination. They do not avoid hard truths—they carry them in their bodies. They do not ignore injustice—they name it and dream beyond it. Their encounter is joy: not the absence of hardship, but the in-breaking of God's kin(g)dom through courageous solidarity. Elizabeth's voice makes space for Mary's *Magnificat* to rise. Her witness invites us to name systems that break bodies and hearts—and to celebrate those who resist them. In Elizabeth, joy becomes both a spiritual practice and a justice-filled act of communal recognition.

Third Sunday of Advent

The Candle of Joy

Person A: The birth of Jesus has been told and retold a thousand times and in a thousand ways. Its impact cannot be contained in any one perspective. But who is telling the story changes how we hear it, how we imagine it, how we experience it.

All: We light the candle of hope because hope creates a path for a new, unknown story to unfold.

Light the first candle...the candle of hope.

All: We light the candle of peace because peace requires us to pay attention to the needs of those around us.

Light the second candle...the candle of peace.

Person B: Close your eyes for a moment. Imagine two cousins embracing and sharing life-changing news with one another. One, an older woman, who knew the physical risks of bearing a child late in life. The other, a not-yet-married woman, who was aware of the social stigmas in her society. Yet each chose joy over fear. Imagine the pure joy of this wonderful occasion.

(Wait a full ten seconds before speaking resumes)

Person A: Open your eyes. When Elizabeth shares her surprising news with Mary, her joy doubles upon hearing that Mary is also pregnant. The two women sing of joy as they sense, literally, in their bodies that change is coming.

Person B: A joy of defiance that good news perseveres even in the most difficult of circumstances. From Isaiah to Mary and Elizabeth, from biblical times to the present, joy can be found. Joy is not a denial of harm that is happening; it is a refusal to let injustice define all reality.

Person A: A joy that moves from personal experience to communal transformation in the song that Elizabeth and Mary proclaimed, and we proclaim today. A joy our world needs to experience this season, not to hide from what is wrong, but to strengthen God's people to bear a world that is not right.

All: Today, we light the candle of joy because joy sustains us in the midst of uncertainty.

Light the third (pink) candle...the candle of joy.