



December 21st, 2025
Enthroned by Love
Advent 4

GUESTS, Welcome to our faith community. To learn more about us please visit our website at www.unionucc.org or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/unionneffs. Let us know you're here by completing the Welcome Card in the racks in front of you.

Vision Statement

UNION UCC: RELEVANT, ENGAGED, and GROWING

Mission Statement

Our church is a diverse family of believers, spiritually united in Christ, rooted in a rich heritage and growing with vitality into the future. We proclaim God's word, nurturing and inspiring dedicated Christian discipleship through worship, education, pastoral care, fellowship, and outreach within our community and the world.

***No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.***

Union UCC is an Open and Affirming (ONA) Community.

Lay Readers: 8 am– Rosalie Snyder 10:30 am– Vicki Mayk

Ushers: 8 am- Connie Gioielli, Dixie Gross, Debbie Romig

10:30 am– Donna Christman, Gloria Toner, Deb Wenner, Doug Brace, Marianne Kitzmiller, Brian Horwith, Maryann Puia,

Greeters: George & Val Borman, Margie & Malcolm MacKenzie

Sound: Mike Baer

GATHERING

Like the iconic figures gathered around the Christ Child in our nativity scenes, we gather together because we want to know Jesus more as we seek to bring his Reign of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love on earth.

Prelude Music

Christmas Carol Medley

John Bayless

Blake Hoppes, Piano

Welcome to Union UCC! Welcome & Announcements

We often share parts of worship responsively.

Phrases in Bold = All Read

Phrases NOT in bold = Leader

We Gather at the Scene

Leader: As we have ventured “beyond the lullaby” to unpack the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus, we have encountered a continuing human saga—one in which lullaby is met with lament for all that is not right with this world. But as we prepare for the celebration of the birth soon upon us, we are reminded that what also endures in the human story is the presence of hope beyond hopelessness, peace beyond understanding, and joy beyond despair. This is all made possible through the steadfast love of God-with-us.

**So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh,
Come, peasant, king to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.**

Leader: When we hear “let loving hearts enthrone him” in our theme carol, we are encountering the “essence of the message.” Love is at the heart of this beloved story of the birth of Christ. It is love that is the true definition of “kingdom,” of “kinship.” No one exemplifies this more than Joseph’s love for Mary and for the child. He is protector of Love; he is hospitality incarnated. Not only the very life of Jesus was in his hands, but his own character and

sacrifice were influential in the way that Jesus went on to live his life and center "love for all" as his message.

Reader 1: We light this candle of Love for those who need it most.

Reader 2: For all who feel they are on the outskirts of love.

Reader 1: For all who know the loss of a love.

Reader 2: For all who are rejected because of who they are

Reader 1: Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this:

"How will we make sacrificial love our aim in our time?"

Reader 2: What child IS this? This, this, is the babe who was swaddled in love and wraps us all in love forever.

**ALL SING: This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary**

Prayer of Invocation

**ALL: Here, at the nativity of your birth,
give us the courage to face this moment
with a steadfast love that casts out fear.
Open us to new understandings of
the unfolding story of your presence among us.
Show us how to be with and for one another
in ways that add to the flourishing of all creation.
We pray in the name of the Child,
the Love Enthroned in our hearts and lives.
Amen.**

Greeting

Peace be with you!
And also with you!
Let us pass the peace of Christ with one another.

***Please rise in body or spirit to greet each other and for the first song.**

***Hymn #192** Angels from the Realms of Glory
Gold Hymnal/Hymns for the Family of God

**Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;**

**Ye who sang creation's story
Now proclaim Messiah's birth.**

Refrain:

**Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.**

**Shepherds, in the field abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing;
Yonder shines the infant light:
Refrain**

**Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations;
Ye have seen His natal star.
Refrain**

**Saints, before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear;
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In His temple shall appear.
Refrain**

Please be seated.

10:30 Children's Time

SONG

**ALL: Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

Skit with Miss Nikki and Pastors

**ALL: 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.**

Sundays at 10:30am: Worship Children's Church for ages 3-grade 5. Kids start in worship with their family and are invited forward for a children's time, They then leave with Ms. Nikki and return before worship is over. They will return to worship before it's over and if not, please pick up your children in Room 100. If you want your child to stay in worship with you, please let them know.

Also on Sundays 9:15-10:15 am, ages 3 to grade 7. Kids are invited to the Education Hour with Ms. Nikki and Leaders.

Watch for God First Wednesdays and other events too!

Music Offering: Where Are You Christmas?

Will Jennings, James Horner and Mariah Carey

Chimers: Dan Haftl, John Fabian, Debbie Romig, Susan Glosan, Sandy Daumer, Bonnie Herzog, Barbara Carinci, Ron Pope, Margie Mackenzie, Dawn Dengler, Carol Pope, Tami Wassum and Malcolm Mackenzie

Director: Edie Fella

Thank you to the Herzog Family and the Memorial Fund: A new extension octave of chimes was purchased in memory of Janice Herzog.

We Hear the Story

Introduction by Leader/Reader: The story of Joseph is told most clearly in the Gospel according to Matthew. Today we join the story in Mathew 1:18-25 as Joseph must decide what to do when Mary becomes pregnant. In the book, *The First Advent in Palestine*, author Kelley Nikondeha says this:

"Joseph entered into her disgrace...They shouldered the shame together... God had invited him into the heart of the divine deliverance operation- along with its social stigma. Indeed, following the unborn Christ already had consequences."

Hear now the beginning of the story of Jesus' saving love.

This is how the birth of Jesus came about. When Jesus' mother, Mary, was engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her husband, an upright person unwilling to disgrace her, decided to divorce her quietly. This was Joseph's intention when suddenly the

angel of God appeared in a dream and said, "Joseph, heir to the House of David, don't be afraid to wed Mary; it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child. She is to have a son, and you are to name him Jesus—'Salvation'—because he will save the people from their sins." All this happened to fulfill what God has said through the prophet:

*"The virgin will be with child
and give birth,
and the child will be named 'Immanuel'
—a name that means 'God is with us.'"*

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of God had directed, and they went ahead with the marriage. He did not have intercourse with her until she had given birth; she had a son, and they named him Jesus.

The Message Through Word and Music

Pastor Kris

Music Offering: Little Drummer Boy

Vocalists: Kylie Masters, Marlie Heym, Katelyn Attieh, Jillian Krempasky, Carter Sachse, Isaiah Colfield, Eric Wood, Jaxon Egge, Garet Hill

Trumpets: Mitchel Roth, Andy Hill, Matt Barbieri

Percussion: Isaac Brace

Arr. And Director: Matt Gerry with Blake Hoppes

Pastor Kris

Music Offering: Angels We Have Heard on High

Arr. And Director: Matt Gerry with Blake Hoppes

Pastor Kris

Music Offering: Go Tell It on the Mountain

Arr. And Director: Matt Gerry with Blake Hoppes

Pastor Kris

Music Offering: What Child Is This? Arr. Alex Guebert

Chimers

Director: Edie Fella

Books and Prayer Journals to reflect and learn more are on the table in the lobby.

Blessings on your journey to the manger.

Our Friday and Sunday class is reading - **The First Advent In Palestine: Reversals, Resistance, and the Ongoing Complexity of Hope** by Kelley Nikondeah

What Child IS This? Beyond the Lullaby A daily journal for Advent.

RESPONDING

Our faithful response is to praise God for this story of Emmanuel, God-With-Us, even and especially in the midst of difficulty, for God is indeed with us even still.

Prayers

Great Holy One
by Brian Wren and Susan Heafield

All Sung:

**Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.**

Leader: In this moment of silent contemplation, we lift up our hopes for the world, for its people, for the kind of kin-dom embodied by the child who was Love Incarnate.

Time of Silent Contemplation

**Awesome one, how shall we meet you?
“In the wisdom of a child, in opponents reconciled?
When you meet with sudden kindness,
find my holy place in your neighbor’s face.”**

**Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.**

*Leader: Holy Living One,
Child of Love,
Spirit of Acceptance
we come to you today weary of the divisions*

perpetrated by those who profit from fear,
weary of continued violence by those
who refuse to acknowledge the right
to love and life for all people.

We know you are with us,
for you came to our human story
when we needed your message so much.
We still do.

We ask, "what child is this that we follow, and who are we
in the scene of this unfolding story?"

As the manger awaits the arrival of the child,
we pray for a hospitality like Joseph's,
and we again plead for your presence to break into our lives
and show us the light of love.
And we ask for the courage to step into the scene,
preparing the way for your kin-dom.

We give you thanks, O God, this day for...
We name our sorrow this day for...
We ask for your forgiveness this day for...

Be with us as we seek to be the Body of Christ in the world.
We pray this in the way you taught us, saying...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**ALL: 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.**

**ALL Sung: Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.**

NEWS ABOUT THE MINISTRY AND MISSION OF GOD'S CHURCH AT UNION

Dreaming God's Dream Moment from our Financial Leadership Team

10:30: Brynn Buskirk

Christmas Mission Offering

You can support this by using the Christmas Mission Offering envelope in your envelope packet, or a blank envelope marked - Christmas Mission, or donate electronically by using any of the options below and noting "Christmas Mission."

This year we are supporting:

HUGS Pediatric Cancer Foundation of the Lehigh Valley -

When a parent hears the words "your child has cancer," their world is forever altered. PCFLV can immediately step in and offer assistance and support to the entire family.

Allentown Rescue Mission - Since 1900, the Allentown Rescue Mission has rescued, rehabilitated, and restored men in crisis across the Greater Lehigh Valley. Their approach is both practical and spiritual, meeting immediate needs while addressing root causes through the power of Christ.

Invitation to the Offering

What gifts are adequate for the Child Enthroned by Love? Our theme song says, "so bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come peasant, king, to own him." Whether what we have to give is simply the gift of our presence and gratitude, or if we are privileged with coffers of precious resources, we give what we can. In this way we "take ownership" of our role in the scene, in the unfolding story of Love.

Music Offering: A Christmas Gift
Dino Kartsonakis & Nathan DiGesare
Blake Hoppes, piano

Ambassadors (everyone!): Share our news, events, and spirit on social media and with your friends, family, and neighbors.

That's what keeps us relevant, engaged, and growing!

Watch for Union UCC merchandise soon!



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Relevant • Engaged • Growing



OFFERING

Dreaming God's Dream

NO GIFT TOO SMALL. NO DREAM TOO BIG.

Thank you for all the ways that you help us make God's dream a reality at Union UCC.

ELECTRONIC GIVING <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-Z51X/home> or **QR code**. Single or ongoing donation with credit/debit card. Help with fees if you can.

FREE Vanco Mobile Faith Engagement app. Look for our church Union United Church of Christ, Neffs, PA and register your information to contribute.

Venmo @unionuccneffs Make a donation or pay for a fundraiser or event. Complete "What's this for?" See QR code.

Cash or checks to "Union UCC" Place in Sunday's offering plate with a member offering envelope or guest envelope (in the seat racks).

Please reach out to Don Penrod or Pastor Kris if you have questions or if you'd like to learn more about other giving options or legacy gifts to Union.

Electronic Giving



Vanco Mobile



Venmo



*** Offering Response**

ALL Sung:

**This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!**

SENDING FORTH

Just as our theme carol asks, "what child is this?" we, too, have come with our questions this day. We go into the world with answers of Good News, being the Body of Christ through our words and deeds.

We Ask, We Answer

As we prepare to go into the world,
let us ask and answer the question we came with.

What child IS this?

This is the one surrounded by sacrificial love.

What child IS this?

This is the one who would go on to great sacrifice in the name of love.

What child IS this?

This, this is the one "Enthroned by Love"
who invites us into more love than we thought was possible.

Benediction

May our Gracious God,
the Child of Love,
the Spirit of Resistance to Injustice
be with you now and as you go.

Amen.

***HYMN** #128 In the Bleak Midwinter
Black Hymnal/New Century Hymnal

**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.

What can I offer, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lam.
If I were a wise one, I would do my part;
But what can I offer: All my heart.

Postlude Music: Angels We Have Heard on High
Edwin S. Barnes
Blake Hoppes, piano

Worship Theme: c. Worship Design Studio
Worship Design Team: Kathy Bonsell, Claire Kern, Deb Topp,
Pastor Kris, Nikki Pentland, Pastor Kayli
Sanctuary Decorations: Kathy Milander and Family,
Maryann Puia and Family
Outside Decorations: Worship Committee, Donna Christman and
Teresa Dalrymple
Special thanks to Ori Handwerk and Phil Wehr

EVIDENCE OF STEWARDSHIP LAST SUNDAY

Offering (e-giving, envelopes, and plate)	
Last Week	\$6,718.00
Calendar Year 2025 (Jan-Nov)	\$338,493.00
Calendar Year 2024 (Jan.-Nov)	\$320,290.00
Change from Last Year	5.7%
Budget FY 2025-2026 (July-Nov)	\$ 156,840.00
Actual Fiscal Year-to-Date (July-Nov)	\$151,776.00
Difference in Giving vs. Budget	-3.2%
Additional financial information available in Consistory Minutes	

Attendance Last Week	
8 AM	Snowed Out
10:30 AM	64
Online Views	-
Sunday School	10
God First	30
Faith on Tap	38
Breathe	8

2025 Donations to the Northern Lehigh Food Bank:	
Last Week:	1,000 lbs \$100
YTD	6,590 Lbs \$1,560.00

Christmas Mission: \$1,946.00

Presentations to the Glory of God

In loving memory of parents, Ruby & Donald Peters. Miss you.
Love, Ann

In Memory of Rich Correll
- Deana, Ryan, & Brooke Correll

Good News Sponsor— for \$20 help us cover the costs of advertising on social media, mailings, and local papers.

Children's Bulletin Sponsor— for \$8 cover the cost of bulletins for children. Send to Union UCC through your offering envelope or online marked Spread the Good News or Children's Bulletin. Contact Sarah to sign up for a certain date or to sponsor in honor or memory of someone.