



December 7th, 2025
The Silent Word
Advent 2

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– Ron Pope 10:30 am– Doug Kuntz
Ushers: 8 am– Phil Wehr, Ron Pope, Leoma Kern
10:30 am– Don Penrod, Scott Nagle, Tami Herzog Wassum,
John Fabian, Jennifer Haley, Carolyn Seyler
Greeters: Geoff & Sara Jane Brace, Doug & Angie Kuntz
Sound: Doug Albert

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

Emmanuel & O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Arr. Joel Raney

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: We continue our Advent series inspired by the dear carol, "What Child is This?" However, we are asking it this way: "What Child **IS** This?" We are going "Beyond the Lullaby" to ask many more questions of who this child was, especially in the time that he was born which was not really a peaceful time for all people, even though it was called the "Pax Romana."*

Why lies He in such mean estate,

Where ox and ass are feeding?

Good Christian, fear: for sinners here

The silent Word is pleading.

Leader: The poet of our theme carol, "What Child is This," penned the phrase "the silent Word is pleading." Our vision of the child in the manger may be the soothing lullaby and the silent night, but the reality of babies, and of that time in history, is that of a "crying out." It was a time when many were silenced, and the need for prophesying justice in the midst of trauma was great. Zechariah does this when his silence is lifted. The Word became Flesh for such a time.

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

Reader 2: For all who are being silenced.

Reader 1: For all who are afraid to speak out.

Reader 2: For all who know that peace comes with justice.

Reader 1: Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this:
"How will we cry out for true peace for ALL people? How will we soothe the trauma of the world in our time?"

Reader 2: What child IS this? This, this, is the Prince of Peace who invites us to proclaim his reign 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 new air in our lungs.
Open us to new understandings of
the unfolding story of your presence among us.
Show us the true meaning of peace on earth,
good will for all.
We pray in the name of the Child,
the Prince of Peace 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 #169 O Come, O Come Emmanuel**
Gold Hymnal/Hymns for the Family of God

**O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.**

Refrain:
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O Wisdom from on high,
and order all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go.
Refrain

O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
who orderest all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.
Refrain

O come, Desire of nations, bind
in one the hearts of humankind;
bid thou our sad divisions cease,
and be thyself our King of Peace.
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: Christmas Sanctus

Words by Susan Naus Dengler and Music by Lee Dengler

8:00 Heritage Choir, 10:30 Horizons Choir

We Hear the Story

Introduction by Leader/Reader: Today we hear the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth. They lived in a time called the "Pax Romana," or Roman Peace, and many called Caesar a "savior" because he ended, by force, the seemingly endless cycle of war. In the book, *The First Advent in Palestine*, author Kelley Nikondeha says this:

"What made some see Caesar as a savior was a kind of peace that benefited the few while exploiting the many; one that usurped land and harvests from the poor. Perhaps, I thought, the first Advent was God's critique of what the world called peace."

It was in this time of "peace with oppression" that religious leaders like Zechariah had to serve, making sure to walk the line of honor to God, but deference to Caesar and to Herod, the so-called "King of the Jews." Hear the story from Luke 1:5-25:

In the days of the ruler Herod, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the priestly class of Abijah. His wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron. Both were worthy in the sight of God and scrupulously observed all the commandments and observances of our God. They were childless—unable to conceive—and they were both advanced in years. Now it was the turn of Zechariah's priestly class to serve. And as he was fulfilling his priestly office before God, it fell to him by lot, according to priestly usage, to enter the sanctuary of our God and offer incense. While the full assembly of people was praying outside at the time of day when the incense was offered, an angel of our God appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. Zechariah was deeply disturbed upon seeing the angel, and was overcome with fear.

The angel said to him, "Don't be frightened, Zechariah. Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear a son, whom you'll name John. He will be your joy and delight and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of our God. He must never drink wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. And he will bring many of the children of Israel back to their God Most High. He will go before God as a forerunner, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the rebellious to the wisdom of the just—to make ready a people prepared for our God."

Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man, and my wife too is advanced in age." The angel replied, "I am Gabriel, who stands before God. I was sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. But because you have not trusted my words, you'll be mute—unable to speak—until the day these things take place. They'll all come true in due season." Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondered about his delay in the sanctuary. When he finally came out he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision inside. But he could only make signs to them and remained mute. Then, when his time of priestly service was over, he went home.

Some time later, Elizabeth conceived. She went into seclusion for five months, saying, "Our God has done this for me. In these days, God has shown favor to us and taken away the disgrace of our having no children."

Leader/Reader: We move forward in the same chapter of Luke to verses 57-80 where the story of Zechariah continues after the birth of their son. As was promised, Zechariah was silent no longer. When he began to speak, it was a word of prophecy about his son John making the way for the Promised One and the way of true peace. Hear the story as it continues:

When the time came for Elizabeth to deliver, she gave birth to a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard that God had been merciful to her, they shared her joy. When all had assembled for the circumcision on the eighth day, they intended to name the baby after his father Zechariah. But his mother spoke up, "No, he is to be called John."

They pointed out to her, "But no one in your family has this name." Then they made signs to the father to find out what he wanted the child to be named. The father asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." They were all astonished.

Immediately Zechariah's mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God. Their neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea, people were talking about these events. All who heard the news stored it in their hearts and said, "What will this child turn out to be?" For God's hand was with him. Zechariah, John's father, was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

'Blessed are you, the Most High God of Israel—
for you have visited and redeemed your people.
You have raised up a mighty savior for us
of the house of David,

as you promised through the mouths of your holy ones,
the prophets of ancient times: salvation from our enemies
and from the hands of all our foes.

You have shown mercy to our ancestors
by remembering the holy Covenant
you made with them,

the oath you swore to Sarah and Abraham, granting that we,
delivered from the hands of our enemies,
might serve you without fear, in holiness and justice,
in your presence all our days.

And you, my child, will be called the prophet of the Most High,
for you'll go before our God
to prepare the way for the Promised One,
giving the people the knowledge of salvation
through forgiveness of their sins.

Such is the tender mercy of our God, who from on high
will bring the Rising Sun to visit us,
to give light to those who live
in darkness and the shadow of death
and to guide our feet
into the way of peace."

In the meantime, the child grew up and became strong in spirit. He lived out in the desert until the day he appeared openly in Israel.

Message
Pastor Kris

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 Headfield

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 became the Prince of Peace

Time of Silent Contemplation

ALL Sung: Seeking one, how will you meet us?

**'In the person who resists hate and greed, and then persists;
when my people work together, righting ancient wrongs,
singing peaceful songs**

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

Leader: Holy Living One,

Child of Peace,
Spirit of Justice
we come to you today weary of ongoing unrest,
weary of greedy forces claiming what's "right" for the many
based on what benefits the few.
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 waits for your arrival,
we again plead for your presence to break into our lives
and show us the light of peace.
And we ask for the courage to step into the scene,
and raise our voices for those who cannot.

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.**

**Celebrating and Blessing Our Members and Disciples
Of 1-19 years**

Video:

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

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 Silent Word, the Prince of Peace? 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 Peace.

Faith Commitment Cards – please complete and return your Faith Commitment Card by January 18 by placing it in the offering plate, or in the box at the sanctuary entrance, or by completing it with the link <https://bit.ly/faithcommitment25-26>

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



Music Offering: O Holy Night Adolphe Adam
Blake Hoppes, piano

*** 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 born in a time
when too many were silenced.

What child IS this?

This is the one whose voice would ring out,
reminding all that peace does not come through violence.

What child IS this?

This, this is the “Prince of Peace” who shows us the kin-dom in
which all have a voice, and no one is afraid.

Benediction

May the Voice of the Divine,
the Child of Peace,
the Spirit of Resistance to Injustice
be with you now and as you go.

Amen.

***HYMN #173** O Little Town of Bethlehem
Gold Hymnal/Hymns for the Family of God

**O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep**

the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary;
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive Him still,
the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin and enter in;
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels,
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel!

Postlude Music God Rest Ye Merry, Gentleman Traditional
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	\$4,501.00
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	44
10:30 AM	76
Online Views	-
Sunday School	8
God First	30
Faith on Tap	38
Breathe	8

2025 Donations to the Northern Lehigh Food Bank:	
Last Week:	175 lbs \$125
YTD	5,590 Lbs \$1,460.00

Christmas Mission: \$725.00

Presentations to the Glory of God

Glory to God
By Wes & Maria Beltz

In Honor of Family and Friends
By Karen & John Nuschke

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.