

# ST. JOHN'S GRACE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1000 S ROLLING ROAD, CATONSVILLE, MARYLAND

THE PEOPLE OF ST. JOHN'S GRACE GATHER FOR

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 16, 2018 10:15 A.M.

Advent is the first “season” in the Church year. Starting the fourth Sunday before Christmas and ending Christmas Eve, Advent serves as a period of waiting and preparation for Christmas. Advent means “coming” and the season emphasizes the coming of Jesus, both as a child in Bethlehem, and as merciful Savior and Redeemer. The four Sundays in advent are Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

+Please rise in body or in spirit

Congregation reads text in *bold italic*

## WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

### PRELUDE

### WE CENTER OUR HEARTS

God of light and joy, renew in us today the gifts of your Holy Spirit. We have come together, eager for good news. We are here for instructions, ready to do the work you call us to do in the world. Equip us in this time of worship to draw deeply from the waters of salvation. Fill us with your love that we may pass it on. Recall us to truth and excellence and justice in all we say and do. Amen.

+HYMN OF PRAISE — *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

New Century Hymnal #116

### +LITANY OF PRAISE

Rejoice, give thanks; call on God's name;

The Holy One is in our midst.

***How good it is to come home to God's house!***

***How good it is to gather in Christ's presence!***

Sing aloud! Exult with all your heart;

The Sovereign One has done glorious things.

***We offer up our anxieties, seeking God's peace.***

***We face our plenty, eager to share.***

Shout your praise! Express your joy!

The God of our salvation welcomes us.

***God's love is renewing us in these moments;***

***God's strength is becoming our song!***

#### **+MORNING PRAYER**

***God of life and love, whose good news often comes in strange packages, open our eyes and ears to see and hear your message. Open our hearts to embrace one another in our caring. Help us to share generously and to receive graciously the gifts we have received from your hand. Guide us to honest, peaceful, joyous relationships, that your will may be done among us. Amen.***

#### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

***What shall we do, O God? We can never do enough to deserve your love. We confess that we are not always truthful. We have defaced the purity of your love for us. We have embraced ugliness and oppression rather than loveliness and grace. We have distorted your cries for justice in order to benefit ourselves. We have given less than our best to others and to you. Forgive us, we pray. Amen.***

#### **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

God has taken away the judgments against us. The evil we have feared cannot triumph. The enemies we have harbored in our own souls will no longer oppress us. Disasters we have experienced are not the last word. God restores us to the family, welcomes us with open arms, and strengthens us for each day's challenges. Praise God, give thanks, and let the world know of God's marvelous deeds.

## LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE OF JOY

Let us light this third candle of Advent, a candle of Joy.

In its light, let us turn our worries into prayers  
for God to be present to us right now,  
as we prepare for the coming of Christ.

Let this candle of Advent Joy  
shine in our hearts all week to remind us  
to pray and praise and place Christ at the center this season.

## CHILDREN'S TIME

### WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

#### CHRISTMAS CANTATA—

*Jesus! The Advent of the Messiah* by Mary McDonald & Rose Aspinall

Singers: Chancel Choir

Readers: David Nau and Rev. Jenn

### WE OPEN OURSELVES TO GOD IN GRATITUDE AND PRAYER

#### PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

*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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

## WE SHARE OUR GIFTS

### INVITATION TO GIVING

Whether we face plenty or hunger, abundance or want, we are in debt to God for all we have and all we are. In these moments of thankfulness, we remember how God has blessed us. We give with joy because we trust the God of our salvation.

### +DOXOLOGY—*My Soul Gives Glory to My God*

**My soul gives glory to my God.**

**My heart pours out its praise.**

**God lifted up my lowliness**

**In many marvelous ways.**

**Praise God, whose loving covenant**

**Supports those in distress,**

**Remembering past promises**

**With present faithfulness.**

### +PRAYER OF DEDICATION

*We rejoice, O God of peace, in the privilege of giving without fear. You come to us daily with blessings too numerous to count. You are the Holy One whose presence relieves our anxieties, feeds our hungers, and stirs our compassion. Through our offerings, we express our gratitude. As we give of ourselves, we respond to your call to bear fruit and to make your name known among the nations. Thank you for accepting all we offer. Amen.*

## WE GO OUT TO LOVE AND TO SERVE

### +COMMISSION AND BLESSING

The whole universe is God's dwelling place.

Find your home with God wherever you go.

***Surely God is our salvation;  
we will trust and not be afraid.***

Rejoice, for Christ has come and is coming,  
whose presence brings peace to our hearts and minds.

***We can do all things in Christ, who strengthens us.  
We have much to share with the world.***

God, who has blessed you, commissions you for service.

Shout and sing for joy; praise God in all you do.

***God has renewed and refreshed us this day.  
God's strength will be our song wherever we go. Amen.***

+CLOSING HYMN— *Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates*      New Century Hymnal #116

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

**We welcome you this morning, and invite you to return,  
and worship and fellowship with us every Sunday morning:**

**Church School (classes for all ages) 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM**

**Worship 10:15 AM**

**Worship with us this Christmas:**

**Christmas Eve Family Worship, December 24, 6:00 p.m.**

**Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Worship, December 24, 9:00 p.m.**

**Wishing you the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love  
that Advent promises and Christmas brings!**