

THE GOOD NEWS OF ADVENT

WHEN THERE SEEMS TO BE NO GOOD NEWS...

December 3, 10, 17, 24, 2023.



During this 2023 Advent and Christmas season, join us as we seek to deepen the spiritual connections within ourselves, with each other, our community and world, and with God. Invite a friend to make this journey with you.

A song released in 1983 by the Canadian country music star, Anne Murray, **still today in 2023—maybe especially in these times**--stirs in us the desire if not a deep need for “a little good news today” in our lives. In one verse and the chorus, Murray sings:

*“There’s a local paper rolled up in a rubber band
One more sad story’s one more than I can stand
Just once how I’d like to see the headline say.”*

*“Not much to print today, can’t find nothin’ bad to say”, because
Nobody robbed a liquor store on the lower part of town
Nobody OD’ed, nobody burned a single buildin’ down
Nobody fired a shot in anger, nobody had to die in vain
We sure could use a little good news today.”*

Some recent headlines in the news: ◇◇ *“Injured Gazans, foreign nationals enter Egypt;”* ◇◇ *How AI is crafting a world where our worst stereotypes are realized;”* ◇◇ *“Mike Johnson is a pro-gun Christian nationalist. Yes. Be afraid;”* ◇◇ *“Maine shootings suspect dead after 48-hour manhunt;”* ◇◇ *“How NFL hiring practices block Black coaches from top jobs.”* Indeed, “we sure could use a little good news today.” To be honest, there are not many ‘good news’ headlines; they are overwhelmed by the ‘bad news.’ (Headlines from The Washington Post 11-1-23)

How do we as people of faith respond? How does the church respond? How do we talk about these headlines and challenges as we come to the end of 2023? and as we enter a new Christian calendar in the season called, 'Advent'? Is there any good news to share?

Yes, there is good news in Advent and Christmas, and by this theme -- "The Good News Gift of Advent"-- we will explore the reasons, lots of reasons, that we re-claim the power of Advent in our lives. **What is the gift of Advent this year?** It is a multi-layered gift we need more than ever: Hope, Comfort, Joy, and Love/Courage. Drawing mostly on four texts from the prophet, Isaiah, we will explore these gifts we surely need as 2023 comes to an end: **Hope, Comfort, Joy, and Love/Courage.**

Join us for worship for the gift of Advent and the gift of Christmas."

SUNDAY WORSHIP

December 3 – First Sunday of Advent - 11:00 a.m.

Theme: "The Good News Gift of Advent: HOPE!"

Scriptures: Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Mark 13:24-37

Sermon: "Hope or Humbug?" or "Who Got It Right? Scrooge or Bob Cratchit?"

Advent Candle: HOPE

Sacrament of Holy Communion

December 10 – Second Sunday of Advent - 11:00 a.m.

Theme: "The Good News Gift of Advent: COMFORT!"

Scriptures: Isaiah 40:1-11; Ps. 85:1-2, 8-13 & Mark 1:1-8

Sermon: "Be the Comforting Peace to Others You Want for Yourself"

Advent Candle: PEACE

December 17 – Third Sunday of Advent - 11:00 a.m.

Theme: "The Good News Gift of Advent: JOY!"

Scriptures: Is. 6:1-4; 8-11; Luke 1:46b-55; John 1:6-8' 19-28

Choir Cantata: "Appalachian Winter"

Advent Candle: JOY

December 24 – Fourth Sunday of Advent - 11:00 a.m.

Theme: "The Good News Gift of Advent: LOVE/COURAGE"

Scriptures: Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 1:26-38

Sermon: "Courage that Overcomes Fear" or "Sometimes Courage is All We Have"

Advent Candle: LOVE and COURAGE

The Good News Gift of Christmas

December 24 – Christmas Eve 7:30 p.m. Prelude/Concert

Theme: “The Good News Gift of Christmas” – Service of Candles and Carols

Scriptures: Isaiah 62:6-12; Ps 97; Titus 3:4-7; & Luke 2:1-20

Sermon: “The Good News The Gift that Keeps on Giving”

Lots of traditional Christmas Eve Singing

December 31– First Sunday After Christmas – 11:00 a.m.

Scriptures: Isaiah 61:10-62:3 Ps 148; Luke 2:22-40

(Jesus presented in the Temple)

A Quiet Contemplative Service of Reflection on the Good News You Discovered this Advent and Christmas

Enjoy a FREE copy of this Booklet

Not feeling particularly merry or bright this season? LOW is for you. Let’s be honest about Advent: we’re often forced to put on a happy face, to pretend we’re merry when we’re frustrated and stressed and exhausted by the expectations of others. And this year, we’re also experiencing despair, grief, and trauma, as we wonder how the world will ever get through the 20+ wars and national conflicts. In this honest Advent devotional, best-selling progressive Christian author John Pavlovitz reminds us that God came to meet us in the low places in our lives, in the gritty, messy reality of the world. In these daily devotionals for the holiday season, Jesus walks with us, reminding us that the journey isn’t about escaping this world to an elevated Heaven somewhere else, but to bring Heaven down. “God with us” is Jesus, getting low. *Each devotional includes a scripture and Advent reflection on Jesus meeting us on the ground, in the grit of our real and messy lives.*

Weekly Reflection and Discussion Sessions – Choose A Time to join with Pastor Gerry and/or Amy Duray for some honest sharing:

Sunday mornings (9:45—10:30 a.m.)

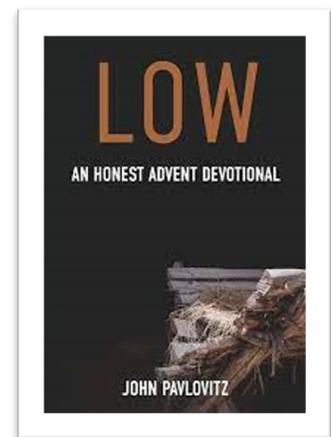
in-person session at church: Dec. 3, 10, & 17

Wednesday mornings Coffee (10:00 – 11:00 a.m.)

Dublin Roasters: Dec. 6, 13. & 20 *Address below

Thursday evenings (7:15 – 8:00 p.m.)

via Zoom: Dec. 7, 14, & 21



Join Our Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85795248409?pwd=K01MY0I3cEFRM3k3NW01S0dHcDBoUT09>

Meeting ID: 857 9524 8409

Passcode: 783953

***Dublin Roasters Address:** 1780 N Market St, Frederick, MD 21701

If you are looking for warm people who will love you just as you are, consider worshipping with us. Grace United Church of Christ has been welcoming seekers for over 125 years, and we invite you to be part of our long tradition of welcoming! Worship at Grace is participative, held in a beautiful traditional sanctuary with inspiring sermon series and a diverse musical offering from our choir and congregation.

Our faith is 2,000 years old. Our thinking is not. We believe in God's continuing testament. This is why we are committed to hearing God's ancient story anew and afresh in our lives and in the world today. We try to remain attentive to God's creative movement in the world. Religion and science are not mutually exclusive, and your head and heart are both welcomed into our places of worship. We prepare our members and leaders to be engaged in ministry in the present and future church, and we embrace all kinds of communities and new modes of thinking. Why? Because God is still speaking.

Beyond Our Walls. Grace UCC is committed to the community beyond our walls in the greater Frederick area. We are involved in a variety of outreach efforts in the name of Christ.

Contact us:

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Grace United Church of Christ

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SUNDAY SERVICE - 11:00 AM - Virtual and in person

Communion is celebrated the first Sunday of every month.

