Welcome + Announcements

Prelude  “Sleepers, Wake, the Night is Flying”  J. S. Bach

Choral Introit  “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (stanza 1)
Latin, c. 12th cent.

Call to Worship

One: Emmanuel, Holy One- we begin with hope. As you have lit our Thanksgiving gatherings -- the abundant and the meager, the festive table and the lonely chair -- we call upon you to be the light of our Advent season now beginning. Shine on the email sent and the soldier far from home, the shopping expedition and the overworked mail carrier, the pageant planning and the one who rings the Salvation Army bell outside a busy grocery store.
Many: Let our lives reflect to others the hope you shine in us.
Amen.

Hymn  NCH 122 “Come, O Long-Expected Jesus”

1. Come, O long expected Jesus, born to set all people free;
   From our fears and sins release us; grant us your true liberty.

2. Israel’s strength and consolation, hope to all the earth impart;
   Dear desire of every nation, enter every longing heart.

3. Born all people to deliver, born a child, you came to reign!
   Born to rule on earth forever, come, be known to us again.

4. By your own eternal Spirit, come to claim us as your own;
   By your all sufficient merit, let us share your cross and crown.

Lighting the Candle of Hope
In hope, Israel dreamed of a Messiah so many years ago. 
In hope, Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem praying for hospitality.
In hope, the wise men followed a star believing that God would guide them along the way.
Like Israel, we sing, “Come, oh come, Emmanuel.”
Like Mary and Joseph, we pray for a world that acts like we belong to one another.
Like the wise men, we travel to this space trusting that God draws near to us—guiding us along the way.

This Sunday, we light the candle of hope because we could not be Advent people without it.

May this candle remind us that God’s light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. May this light serve as an invitation to draw near to God -- for the light of this candle we can feel God’s warmth, we can see more clearly, and together, we can hope for a better day. Amen.

American Sign Language Offering – Hope

Passing the Peace
The peace of Christ is with you all!
And also with you.

Sung Response
Hope shines as the solitary star, faith is the inner light.
You and I together mirror the Light of Lights, And illuminate
the pathway home  (repeat)


Jesus said, “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

For the word of God in scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us,
    Thanks be to God.

Anthem  “My Lord, What A Morning”          Traditional Spiritual, arr.
Althouse

Sermon  Draw near to hope                     Rev. Lacey Brown
Hymn    NCH 103 “Watcher, Tell Us of the Night”

1. Watcher, tell us of the night, 
what its signs of promise are. 
Traveler, O a wondrous sight! 
See that glory-beaming star! 
Watcher, does its beauteous ray 
news of joy or hope foretell? 
Traveler, yes; it brings the day, 
promised day of Israel!

2. Watcher, tell us of the night; 
higher yet that star ascends. 
Traveler, blessedness and light, 
peace and truth its course portends. 
Watcher, will its beams alone 
gild the spot that gave them birth? 
Traveler, ages are its own; 
see, it bursts o’er all the earth!

3. Watcher, tell us of the night, 
for the morning seems to dawn. 
Traveler, shadows take their flight, 
doubt and terror are withdrawn. 
Watcher, you may go your way; 
hasten to your quiet home. 
Traveler, I rejoice today, 
for Emmanuel has come!

Prayers of the People

We conclude with The Lord’s Prayer 
Our Father/Mother, who is 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.
Ministry Moment

Charles Coble and Dawn Koonce,
Community Outreach

Invitation to Give

- **Text the amount of your donation, with one keyword, to 919-888-4541**
  - General – give to CUCC’s general fund
  - Pledge – give toward your pledge
- **You can give online at our website** www.communityucc.org **by simply clicking on Donate.**
- **Or you can always mail a check to our physical address:** 814 Dixie Trail, Raleigh, NC 27607

Offertory “Of the Father’s Love Begotten”

“Of the Father’s love begotten, ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega, He the source, the ending He,
Of the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore! Amen.

Offering Response “Doxology” (tune and harm. from German Christmas hymn, 1539 - NCH 130)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God, all creatures here below,
Praise God for all that Love has done
Creator, Christ, and Spirit One.

Dedication to the Offering

We thank you, Gracious God, for the gifts you have given us. We return money to you that we might do the work of your Son, and
usher in your kingdom here and now. We remain hopeful because we know that your redemption is drawing near. Amen.

Hymn  NCH 117 “Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates”

1. Lift up your heads, O mighty gates; behold the glorious Ruler waits! The Sovereign One is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.

2. Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart from earthly use for heaven's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

3. Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart to you; here, Christ, abide! Let me your inner presence feel; your grace and love in me reveal.

4. So come, my Sovereign; enter in! Let new and nobler life begin; Your Holy Spirit guide us on, until the glorious crown be won.

Benediction

Place your hope in God and God alone. Go from this place with your eyes wide open. Watch for the signs of God’s redemption drawing near and know that God is your light in the darkness. Amen

Postlude “Hope of the World”  Genevan Psalter, 1551
Visit www.communityucc.org to explore ways to connect with our church.

CUCC is here to support you throughout the week. While our physical office is closed, our virtual office is open. Please email office.cucc@gmail.com to reach our office. Please email lacey.cucc@gmail.com for pastoral care needs.

We thank all of those who created parts of today’s liturgy. Copyright and licensing notifications

“Call to Worship,” Written By Maren C. Tirabassi, *Touch Holiness*
“Dedication to the Offering” Written By Stephen Fearing, https://www.liturgylink.net/category/advent/advent-year-c/advent-1c/

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[Logo: United Church of Christ]
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