Welcome + Announcements

Prelude  “Sheep May Safely Graze”  J. S. Bach

Choral Introit

Call to Worship

One: Compassionate God, greet us with your grace this day, for we need you.
Many: We cannot save ourselves.
One: Though we may be frantic with activity, our efforts do not yield peace, peace as only you can give. Today we would be quiet enough to hear your voice. We would be still enough to feel your touch.
Many: Help us to find that place where we can receive as well as give, wait as well as act, and listen as well as speak. Our whole world needs your peace.
One: Let us come before you and learn your ways, laying down our weapons and feeding the hungry.
Many: Draw near to us now and grant us your peace.

Hymn  NCH 110 “Now Bless the God of Israel”

1. Now bless the God of Israel,
   who comes in love and power,
   who raises from the royal house deliverance in this hour.
   Through holy prophets God has sworn
   to free us from alarm,
   to save us from the heavy hand
   of all who wish us harm.
2. Remembering the covenant,
God rescues us from fear,
that we might serve in holiness
and peace from year to year;
And you, my child, shall go before
to preach, to prophesy,
that all may know the tender love,
the grace of God most high.

3. In tender mercy, God will send
the dayspring from on high,
our rising sun, the light of life for those who sit and sigh.
God come to guide our way to peace,
that death shall reign no more.
Sing praises to the Holy One!
O worship and adore!

Lighting the Candle of Peace

I feel peace in beautiful kinesthetic moments:
In moments when we hold hands around the table for grace
when you see siblings laughing at shared memories.

In moments that we as a church share, when we baptize
babies, or hear the choir sing in harmony;
In moments when we hear God say again in scripture, “One day every valley
be lifted up,” and, “Darkness did not overcome the light.”

In such a broken world, peace can feel abstract,
impossible, and naive. And yet, we come to this
sanctuary week after week and say, “The peace of Christ
be with you,” because we believe that God sounds, feels
and looks like peace. So family of God, we light this
candle -- the candle of peace-- as a reminder that when
we draw near to God, we are drawing near to peace.
Thanks be to God. Amen.
American Sign Language Offering – Peace

Passing the Peace

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

Sung Response

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

Reading  Luke 1: 5-7, 10-22, 57-66 (NRSV)

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to Zechariah an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John.

Zechariah said to the angel, “How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years.” The angel replied, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur.”

Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. When he did come out, he could not speak
to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak.

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, “No; he is to be called John.” They said to her, “None of your relatives has this name.” Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And all of them were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said, “What then will this child become?” For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

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  “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”

Sermon  Draw near to peace                Rev. Lacey Brown

Hymn       NCH 105 “Gentle Joseph, Joseph Dear”

1.  “Gentle Joseph, Joseph dear,
    stay with me, for the baby’
God will surely your goodness hear,
    as you will love this newborn child,” says Mary.

2.  “Gladly Mary, Mary mine,
    I will cradle the child divine;
Here will heaven and earth combine,
    for you will bear God’s child, O dearest Mary.”
3. “Peace to all and God’s goodwill,”
heaven and earth with this song will fill;
Soon will God, in the evening still,
be born in Bethlehem, the child of Mary.

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 “He Shall Feed His Flock”
Handel’s Messiah

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

O Gracious God, bless our offering that it may reach and touch those who hunger, who hurt, who seek new hope. As members of the global village, we care about all of our sisters, brothers, and siblings. We pray for discernment and world peace, for liberty to those oppressed, for joy to those who are weary. In honor of our Sovereign God, Amen.
New Members Joining:

Do you desire to affirm your baptism (baptized) into the faith and family of Jesus Christ? I do.
Do you renounce the powers of evil and desire the freedom of new life in Christ? I do.
Do you profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? I do.
Do you promise, by the grace of God, to be Christ's disciple, to follow in the way of our Savior, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ as best you are able?
I promise, with the help of God.

Do you promise, according to the grace give you, to grow in the Christian faith and to be a faithful member of the church of Jesus Christ, celebrating Christ's presence and furthering Christ's mission in all the world?
I promise, with the help of God.

By your baptism, you were made one with us in the body of Christ, the church. Today, we rejoice in your pilgrimage of faith which has brought you to this time and place. We give thanks for every community of faith that has been your spiritual home, and we celebrate your presence in this household of faith. Do you promise to participate in the life and mission of this family of God's people, sharing regularly in the worship of God and enlisting in the work of this local church as it serves this community and the world?
I promise, with the help of God.
Welcome and reception of new members

We welcome you with joy in the common life of this church. We promise you our friendship and prayers as we share the hopes and labors of the church of Jesus Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit may we continue to grow together in God's knowledge and love and be witnesses of our risen Savior.

Celebration of Holy Communion

Invitation
Words of Institution
Sharing the bread and cup
Prayer after receiving

Hymn NCH 108 “Isaiah the Prophet Has Written of Old”

1. Isaiah the prophet has written of old how God’s new creation shall come. Instead of the thorn tree, the fir tree shall grow; the wolf shall lie down with the lamb, the lamb, the wolf shall lie down with the lamb.
2. The mountains and hill shall break forth into song, 
the people’s be led forth in peace; 
The earth shall be filled with knowledge of God 
as the waters cover the sea, the sea, 
as the waters cover the sea.

3. Yet nations sill prey on the meek of the world, 
and conflict turnd parent from child. 
Your people despoil all the sweetness of earth; 
the brier and the thorn tree grow wild, grow wild, 
the brier and the thorn tree grow wild.

4. God, bring to fruition your will for the earth, 
tha no one shall hurt or destroy, 
That wisdom and justice shall reign in the land 
and your people shall go forth in joy, in joy, 
your people shall go forth in joy.

Benediction

Jesus is our Prince of Peace. Draw near to God and draw near to peace. Amen.

Postlude “Shalom, Chaverim” Israeli folk song
Visit www.communityucc.org to explore ways to connect with our church.
C.U.C.C. 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.
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Dedication to the Offering: Written by James H. Hill alt., Touch Holiness

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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
a just world for all
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