

First United Methodist Church of Evergreen Park  
November 28, 2021 11:00am Worship

\*Please stand

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

**\*Call to Worship (Responsive)**

There will be signs in the heavens and distress among the nations.

**When Christ returns in power and glory people will faint with fear.**

But when you see these things, lift up your heads:

**Our redemption is drawing near!**

Heaven and earth may pass away.

**But the Word of God will stand unshaken.**

**\*Hymn**

**“Blessed Be the God of Israel”**

**Red Hymnal p 209  
v.1-3**

**Lighting of the Advent Candle**

*New Members*

One: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

**All: Christ is our light. By grace he came,  
in power he rose; <sup>[SEP]</sup>we wait for Christ to come again.**

One: The days are surely coming, says the Lord, <sup>[SEP]</sup>when I will fulfill the promise, I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

**All: In those days and at that time <sup>[SEP]</sup>God will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.**

One: Make known to us your ways, O Lord; teach us your paths.

**All: Lead us in your truth, and teach us, for you are the God of our salvation; for you we wait all day long.**

**Hymn**

**“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”**

**Red Hymnal p 211  
v. 1**

**Children’s Moment**

**The Call to Confession**

Jesus said, do not let your hearts be weighed down by the sins and worries of this life, but watch and pray for the grace of God, who will save you in your time of trial. With confidence in God’s mercy, let us confess our sin.

**The Prayer of Confession (Unison)**

**Lord, have mercy on us. We are not ready for your coming. We live in sin, as though there were no justice. We live in fear, as though there were no grace. Forgive us, Lord. Show us your mercy and steadfast love. Lead us in your truth, and teach us your paths, for you are the God of our salvation. Amen.**

**The Words of Assurance**

Friends, believe the good news: In Jesus Christ you are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

**Hymn**

**“Blessed Assurance”**

**Red Hymnal p 369  
v.1-3**

**The Prayer of Illumination (Unison)**

**God our salvation, there is wisdom, peace, and joy for those who keep your Word. By the power of your Holy Spirit, lead us in your; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Old Testament**

**Jeremiah 33:14-16**

**Old Testament p 738**

**14** The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise, I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. **15** In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. **16** In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

The Word of God, for the People of God. **Thanks be to God!**

**Psalter (Responsive)****Psalm 25:1-10****Red Hymnal p 756-757****1** To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**2 O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.****3** Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.**4 Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.****5** Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.**6 Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.****7** Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!**8 Good and upright is the Lord; therefore, he instructs sinners in the way.****9** He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.**10 All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.****Epistle****Acts 1:8-14****New Testament p 118**

**8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." **9** When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. **10** While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. **11** They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." **12** Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. **13** When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James's son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas's son of James.

**14** All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.The Word of God, for the People of God. **Thanks be to God!****\*Gospel****Luke 21:25-36****New Testament p 85-86**

**25** "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. **26** People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **27** Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" with power and great glory. **28** Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." **29** Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; **30** as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near.

**31** So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. **32** Truly I tell you; this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. **33** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. **34** "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, **35** like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. **36** 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."

The Word of God, for the People of God. **Thanks be to God!****Message****Beginning with the End****Rev. Caitlyn Nesbit**

This morning we are beginning our Advent sermon series. Yay! Advent!! For this series, we will be following Adam Hamilton's book, Not a Silent Night as we explore Jesus' life and ministry through the lens of his mother Mary. I invite you to purchase the book and follow along, if you would like, as we prepare ourselves to celebrate Jesus' birth. You can find the book really anywhere books are sold, online or in popular book stores. Or/and, just make sure to come back each week as we prepare to receive the gift of Christ together during this season. Let's pray and begin today's message.

**Prayer.**

The seasons of Advent and Lent are always really important times in our tradition as Christians. We spend the season in contemplation and preparing to receive Christ and the gift that Christ is for us. With these seasons, and Advent in particular, there are a lot of traditions that go along with the season of preparation. We have the Hanging of the Greens, the Advent Candle, and our own person traditions. I think those traditions are often for our more secular practice of Christmas, like certain movies we ALWAYS watch during this time of season, but they put us in the spirit of preparation for Christmas day.

As I have been intro-ing for weeks, this year as we prepare as a church, we will be using a book, Not A Silent Night by Adam Hamilton. This book is particularly interesting because it goes through Jesus' life through the lens of Mary. Sometimes we look at the Christmas story from Mary's perspective, but we won't just be covering the story of Jesus' birth this year, we will be looking at the bigger picture of why Jesus' birth is

something to be so greatly celebrated. Something else that is interesting about this book, it is in reverse chronological order. So not only will we be looking at Mary's life with Jesus as a whole, we will be starting at the end and working our way towards Jesus' birth.

We don't really know a whole lot about Mary's life after Jesus' death. The most concrete evidence that we have about what happened to Mary is found in Acts, at the end of this morning's scripture passage. After Jesus' death, he visits his disciples. Talks to them a bit about the kingdom of God, really continues teaching them because even after his death we still need a lot of help to get our acts together, thank you Holy Spirit! After his time with the disciples hear from Jesus, and have proof that he is alive even after death, they witness his ascension. Once Jesus is in heaven, we find the disciples on the move to where we will run into Mary. This is really just a note about the disciples returning to the upper room in Jerusalem, praying, along "certain women" which includes his mother, Mary, and Jesus' other brothers.

And that is what we get about Mary and the end of her life. The end. Sermon over. Not really, but we don't have a whole lot about Mary and what happens to her after Jesus' death. In the Methodist tradition, we don't venerate saints, so Mary plays a very different role in our faith that she does in other traditions. She is the mother of Jesus, so she is a really important person, but we don't hold the same depth of dogma about her. But since this is so interesting, the Roman Catholic belief about what happened to Mary at the end of her life is that she is so honored by God, that after her burial, her body was taken up into heaven. There is a little bit of disagreement about whether or not she died first, but overall, the consensus is that she died and then ascended. Again, there isn't scriptural evidence for this, but it is actually a part of Christian tradition that dates pretty far back into early Christianity.

Within our faith tradition, how Mary died, or what happened immediately after, is not as important as how she lived her life just before her death. I think y'all have caught on to this by now, but we really don't know a whole lot about what life for Mary looked like after Jesus died. Although, what we find in this scripture passage today, and how we see the movement of the church grow, can help lead us to understand what her life was like.

When Jesus died, the disciples lost their friend, their teacher, their guide. Mary lost her child. She would have been overwhelmed by grief from experiencing this loss. Yet, her baby wasn't dead very long. Although the grief of not having him living beside her is something she would always carry, her child resurrected. He came back to life. The little baby born that night we now celebrate did something miraculous. In the face of death, he gave the world hope. He gave her hope. Hope that his life wasn't over, that he continues to live on, and hope for all of God's people to experience the same.

See how transformative this hope is for the disciples and early Christians, it is really likely that Mary also followed the command to continue Jesus' ministry. Mary was there from day one. She didn't just give birth to Jesus and send him on his way. Mary was an active participant and supporter of her son's ministry. So, it wouldn't be a far leap to believe that Mary continued his ministry. She sought out those who were lost and brought them home, she gave aid to those who were in need.

When we celebrate Christmas, we celebrate that Mary's child offers us all the opportunity to experience eternal life. As much as it can feel like jumping to the end of the book, that is the reason Christmas is so important. We are celebrating the good news of eternal life, of a world where God loves us so much God is willing to become a person in the form of a little baby, live life the way we do, transforming the world around him as he lives this human life, and finally is willing to die that we may know a life that never ends. There are two ways to celebrate this gift of eternal life during this Christmas season that I would like for us to touch base on this morning.

#### 1. To be transformed.

Did you know that you are more likely to be killed during a Black Friday shopping spree than a shark attack? Nate was reading this a few days ago, and of course I had to look it up because that is just WILD, but true!<sup>1</sup> Since 2006, only 5 Americans have died in shark attacks, compared to 7 who have died in Black Friday sales.

In his book, Hamilton shares about the man in Long Island, New York, who was a part time seasonal worker at Wal Mart. On Black Friday in 2008, Mr. Damour was assigned to stand by the door at 4:55 am as nearly 2,000 people began to line up. Something happened that made it look as if the doors were going to open, but then closed again. The cold line of people were ready to get inside, and began to surge forward until they broke the glass of the door and pushed the frame on Mr. Damour. After the door fell, the majority of people didn't stop to help this man, a few did, but most rushed inside to get the best deals for that year's Christmas gifts.

It is really, REALLY easy to lose sight of the purpose of Christmas. The practices we have, while wonderful and fun, are also demanding. We end up devoting a lot of time decorating, running from band concert to choir concert, shopping for and wrapping presents, or one of the many other traditions we have. As a result, we become so focused on what needs to get done, we lose sight in why we are doing it.

Advent, as the season of preparation, is the time that we intentionally focus on what Jesus' birth does for our lives. When Mary gave birth to Jesus, she knew there was something very special about her child. But I

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.express.co.uk/life-style/science-technology/618951/Black-Friday-Death-Injury-Shark-Attack>

would bet she didn't realize exactly how his life was going to transform the world around him. We know. We know what Jesus did, and still does for us.

So, the first way to celebrate the gift of eternal life that Jesus offers us is to be transformed. Life gets chaotic and crazy. Looking at the world around us more often than not feels disheartening. It can become difficult for us to prevent these aspects of life from influencing our perspective, yet as Christians we are called to be those who see and bring about hope. So, your challenge for this week, every day, preferably in the morning, take a few moments to identify on where you see hope in the world. It can be through your child or grandchild, through friends or other family members, even neighbors and how they care for each other. It can be in God's creation around us, wherever it is that you see hope. Identify one place, each morning this week. And then when you feel yourself getting lost in the business of the season, or the discouraging state of the world, bring back to the forethought that hope. Jesus offers us a hope that can transform our lives, a hope that can take us from being those who are so wrapped up in what we need to do that we ignore the person in need to those who do everything we see the people around us.

Which leads me to the second way we celebrate eternal life.

2. To transform.

Out of the 2,000 people at that Walk Mart on Black Friday morning in 2008, how many of them do you think were Christian? Luckily Hamilton does some math on this, so it is much more reliable than if it came from me. Living in the U.S. we can guess maybe 80 percent? So about 16 hundred people there were followers of Jesus. How many of them do you think stopped to help? Three. Three of 2,000 people, possible 1,600 Christians stopped to help this dying man who they had a hand putting in that position. Now the real question is, would you have stopped?

We celebrate Christmas by giving gifts, sharing in time together, and all sorts of other things that bring great joy. But those aren't the purpose of Christmas. The purpose of Christmas is that we continue to be those who reflect the hope that is brought into the world with Jesus' birth. That we use this hope to transform people and the world around us.

If Mary were still alive today, or even going back to when she was alive after Jesus' death, I doubt that she spent the remembrance of his birth by accumulating things. It is far more likely she spends it by continuing his mission in the world. By caring for those who are in need, those who are injured, sick, or experiencing difficult times. She would be transforming the world in Jesus' name. So, second challenge, a two-for-one this week.

During this Christmas season, find at least one way to bless some else's life.

[Palos] Some of you have already done this through ministry opportunity like angels of hope. If you haven't, or even if you have, find one way to be a blessing to someone else. It can be making a meal with Pads or Beds+, donating to many different organizations that world to get presents to children that would not have them otherwise, or even donating quality cold weather items to those who are experiencing homelessness and continue to be in need of them. However, you feel called, find one way to transform the world around us by living out Christ's ministry.

Jesus wasn't born into a perfect world, nor do we live in a perfect world now. Yet, when Jesus was born, he brought a light into the world. A light that changed the trajectory of Mary's life until the very end, and a light that continues to shine through us as we are transformed and into the world as we use it to transform the world around us. Let's say a prayer to close.

### **The Prayers of Intercession**

#### **The Lord's Prayer (Unison)**

**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,**

**The Invitation to the Offering**

Trusting in the sure promises of Christ, and grateful for the Spirit's sustaining power, let us bring our tithes and offerings to God.

### **The Offertory Music**

#### **The Doxology**

**"Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"**

**Red Hymnal p 95**

**The Prayer of Thanksgiving (Unison)**

God of righteousness, you have saved us from the worst the world can do and promised to redeem the whole creation when Christ comes again. In faith and hope we offer our gifts of money and self, that we may be part of what you are doing in the world even now, as we watch for Christ’s coming in glory. Amen.

**\*Hymn**

**“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”**

**Red Hymnal p 240  
v.1-3**

**\*The Benediction**

**\*Postlude**

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**Household Prayer: Morning**

Thank you for this new day to sing your praise and watch for signs of your kingdom. By your Spirit, let me abound in love for you and your children, that in living and loving I may point to your coming reign. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

**Household Prayer: Evening**

Thank you for the signs of your coming reign, and for the power of your saving love. Bless all those whom I met today, and strengthen their hope in your power and grace. Now as I close my eyes, I relinquish all anxieties and fears, trusting in your providence and mercy. Amen.

**Save the dates!**

**12/5 Special Church Conference right after church service. This pertains to the Boy Scout Bankruptcy and our charter. This is mandated by the Northern Illinois Conference. We have 3 votes; 1 vote for each charter Evergreen Park, Mt. Greenwood and Beverly. If we approve the bankruptcy plan put forth.**

**12/10 Pre-package cookies for the Cookie Walk.**

**12/11 Cookie Walk 9 a.m. – noon**

**12/12 Church Charge Conference right after church service**

**12/24 Christmas Eve Service 11 a.m.**

**PEOPLE TO KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS:**

Dawn Doran Ruth Fuss, Kurt Gratz, Ardith Inman, Allen Jones, Freddie and Bessie Kendrick, Bessie’s mom Ruth Jones, Greg and Claudia Manow, Ed and Georgeen Slee, **Prayer Shawl and Prayer Bear Recipients; Past and Present Servicepersons**

**\*THIS WEEK AT FUMCEP**

<b>SUNDAY</b>	November 28	<b>11:00 a 11:45 a 7:00 p</b>	<b>Worship Service Coffee Hour Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting</b>
<b>MONDAY</b>	November 29		
<b>TUESDAY</b>	November 30		
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	December 1	6:00 p	Girl Scouts – Brownies – Daisy’s
<b>THURSDAY</b>	December 2		
<b>FRIDAY</b>	December 3		
<b>SATURDAY</b>	December 4	<b>10:00 a</b>	
<b>NEXT SUNDAY</b>	December 5	<b>11:00 a 11:45 a 7:00 p</b>	<b>Worship Service Special Church Conference–Boy Scouts Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting</b>

**OUR CHURCH STAFF**

**Rev. Caitlyn Nesbit, Pastor, [pastorcaitlynnesbit@gmail.com](mailto:pastorcaitlynnesbit@gmail.com)  
Ray Paschke, Accompanist  
Virginia Franson, Nursery Attendant**

**First United Methodist Church of Evergreen Park**

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**30<sup>th</sup> Annual**



**Saturday, December 11th**

**9 am - noon**

**First United Methodist Church Evergreen Park**

**9358 S. Homan Ave.**

**Homemade cookies sold by the pound \$12/lb.**

**Come get some delicious HOMEMADE cookies**



**First United Methodist Church of Evergreen Park**

**9358 S. Homan Avenue**

**Evergreen Park, IL 60805**

**708-422-8451**

**<http://evergreenparkmethodist.org>**



**IN PERSON WORSHIP SUNDAY @ 11 a.m.**