



# **Cherokee Park (virtually) United Church**

Fierce Justice ✨ Radical Love ✨ Abundant Grace  
A Progressive Congregation  
*Welcoming people of all ages, sexual orientations,  
races, and ethnic origins*

Theological Elbow Room  
Global Music  
Community Connected  
Kid Friendly

***Newsletter December 2020***

## Advent and Christmas

As in all other areas of our lives during the pandemic, what we do and how we do it will be different this year, but the heart of what we do remains the same. We cherish our relationships with each other and with all peoples unknown or unseen by us. Amid the confusions and disagreements in communities and our nation, we have also seen great acts of kindness, courage, and forgiveness. To celebrate all that is good, we continue and reformat, and even add to our traditions.

Be sure to join us for virtual worship each Sunday in Advent. Additional spiritual focus comes in the form of *Advent Vespers* each Wednesday evening (taking the place of Adult Forum for a month) led by Joanne Sylvander. Many of the *holiday greens* will still be adorning the sanctuary. You will see the usual *Advent wreath candle lighting*, but also new ways of doing that, with video inserts from our members. The *nativity story* will again be told with the involvement of our children, but in a new way. The *roses of remembrance* will still grace our sanctuary in honor of our departed loved ones. We will miss seeing and hugging each other, we will miss sharing food together, but know that this sacrifice is necessary so that when we come back together, we are all there. See following for more details. Watch for the Pastor's weekly update for ways we can help make Christmas brighter for *families in need* on the West Side.



### Advent Candle Lighting

We all enjoy seeing more of our faces during worship, and our tech guru, Tom, makes many things possible. We are creating a short, one-minute video clip to add to each of our Advent Sundays, of a group zoom of individuals or families lighting one, two, three, or four candles, in each successive week. We record this during the fellowship zoom each Sunday before, promptly at 11:30 a.m. Candles can be hand-held, or on an Advent wreath, or just stuck in a piece of cake or on a bagel, or a battery operated!! Or a candle you make from paper....feel free to be creative.

**Our first zoom will be on Sunday November 22 [to be used on Nov 29], at 11:30 a.m.** Zoom link:

<https://zoom.us/j/544010625?pwd=dWJWVzFrWkN5eUM4bHIEcVZ4anpmQT09>

Contact Susan if you have questions, requests or a reminder each week or a quick lesson if you have never zoomed. [kellystrebig@comcast.net](mailto:kellystrebig@comcast.net)

## Women's Affinity Group

**Friday, December 4, 7 p.m.**

Join us for a friendly gathering of minds and hearts. This month we ask you to bring a Christmas tree ornament with a story (or an Advent or Christmas memory!) to share. You are invited to Zoom with us for safe connections and support during this COVID year. Please contact Jill Jackson if you have questions or ideas for future meeting topics.

Women's Affinity Group Zoom Meeting link.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84994330469?pwd=Ujh1NFhnN1Rlc3U3KzFnU1lzR3VXZz09>



Dial by your location = +1 312 626 6799 US

Meeting ID: 849 9433 0469

Passcode: 119136

## Wednesday Advent Vespers



**December 2, 9, 16, and 23 at 7 p.m.**

We will gather virtually for a time of meditation and reflection followed by discussion on the theme or whatever is on our hearts and minds, during this most unusual time of drawing upon our faith heritage to speak to us in these days. You are welcome to bring a piece, thought, question you would like to share or simply tune in. Joanne Sylvander is preparing a meditation for each week using the following themes.

December 2	<i>The Shadow of Hope</i>	Wait for the Lord who's day is near.
December 9	<i>In Chaos- Peace</i>	Come and fill our hearts with your peace.
December 16	<i>Awful Joy</i>	My soul cries out with a joyful shout.
December 23	<i>You Love Me How Much?</i>	Come, O Unexpected Jesus.

Even if you don't usually join the Wednesday night Adult Forum, this is a good time to let this season into your heart. The link will be in Pastor Matthias' weekly update and also the Sunday bulletin.

## Roses of Remembrance

This year, we will not be collecting money for Christmas roses. Instead we will provide a communal bouquet to symbolize the presence of all the missing loved ones dwelling in our hearts this Christmas.

## *Children's Nativity Gospel*

Children have long been involved in an annual telling of the Christmas story; this year it will be on Christmas Eve at the 5:00 p.m. service, and will be done by combining individual video segments by individuals or families.

Our amazing Sophie LeMeur is coordinating much of this from Montreal, through her tech magic! Please contact Pastor Matthias if you would like to be involved.

*Sophie ~ angel in 2011  
organizer in 2020*

## *Memories from Christmas 2019*



## *December Happy Birthdays*

01 - Michele  
05 - Jaime  
14 - Sophie  
14 - Audrey  
14 - Karolyn  
20 - Jerome  
27 - Russ

*From Pastor Matthias*

Dear CPUC Community,



With the holidays coinciding with the highest reported COVID-19 numbers yet, this holiday season may be tinged with more loneliness and anxiousness than many we've known. We may feel some dread or resignation, rather than upbeat energy and joy.

I remember a praise song sung once at a youth gathering where the lyrics proclaimed: "I'm trading my sorrow; I'm trading my pain; I'm trading it all for the joy of the Lord." I tend to prefer contemplative hymns to the more upbeat "praise" style music. But even at the time, something about this song didn't quite sit right with me. Trading sorrow for joy? We're not talking about baseball cards or juicy rumors. Can feelings really be traded out so easily?

The Bible does often exhort us to "rejoice!" and speaks of finding joy in God. But it also contains sorrows wept over and hurts named and lamented. Sometimes these even sit right next to each other. Take Psalms 21 and 22. 21 begins with joy and exuberance, while 22 begins with the writer feeling utterly forsaken by God.

Joy and sadness, pain and gratitude are not an either/or binary. Our feelings are much more like the way scripture captures them—complex, sometimes conflicting, side by side.

The power of faith in Jesus is not some magical eraser for negative feelings. The power of our faith is that in whatever we are feeling, we worship One who has been there: weeping and laughing, rejoicing and raging, hurting and healing. Not just in some omnipotent, distant way, but in the embodied, lived-experience of everyday human life.

As Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, and New Year's approach looking very different than most years, be assured that you do not have to feel a certain way. You do not have to feel just one way. Listen to your feelings. Be gentle with yourself and your loved ones.

And know that you are deeply loved by God, no matter what you are feeling.

Grace, Love, & Justice,

*Pastor Matthias*

## Council Notes



At the November meeting, the council....

- ♥ received the pastor's report; new items being: meeting with the Worship Ministry and Being Church taskforce planning the All Saints worship and to prepare for the Advent/Christmas season, meetings with the Finance Ministry to plan for 2021 budget, virtual meetings with other clergy doing organizing work around the election to coordinate messaging to our congregations and communities and share resources on voting and values, facilitating a small group as part of the Presbytery's Anti-racism pilgrimage, as well as pastoral care and conversation with members, both proactively reaching out and responding to communications from CPUC members and friends.
- ♥ received a letter requesting transfer of Rev. Tim Johnson's membership to Macalester Plymouth United Church. Motion was passed to grant request, accompanied by a letter of friendship and explanation that, regrettably, a return of a former pastor before a newly installed pastor has had less than a year of in-person pastoring is not advisable, or normal procedure.
- ♥ received a letter of thanks from Running River, an inmate in a Pennsylvania state prison for our support to assist (Chaplain Ammon Bailey) in facilitating indigenous religious practices for inmates; also a request to help publish his book describing his experience as an incarcerated native person; Susan would like to look into the possibilities of this.
- ♥ discussed the church rolls, which is done on a yearly basis to determine whether they are accurate; it was decided that no changes could be made, as during a pandemic, nothing is normal.
- ♥ approved the date for the next (virtual) congregational meeting as Sunday, November 29, after worship; one item will be to vote in the next new council members; Lay Ministries Team is discerning and gathering a slate of proposed new council members.
- ♥ approved the suggestion to start a GoFundMe page to secure funding for Chaplain Bailey's effort in a Pennsylvania state prison. We anticipate a contribution from Native inmates who won a settlement after being denied the free expression of their Native religious beliefs, and will seek to raise \$5,000 to fund sweat lodges and Native religious ceremonies for these inmates.
- ♥ received a report from the Faith Life Ministry that Sophie LeMeur will be spearheading the production of a video montage of the nativity story, involving families and children in the congregation.

``` CPUC members are invited to all (virtual via zoom) council meetings, second Tuesdays 7 p.m. Contact the pastor for access. The next meeting is December 8, 7-8:30 p.m.````



## *Notes from Director of Music, Sandy Waterman*

Hello to all members and friends of Cherokee Park United Church! As we observe the season of Advent, I wish to tell you how grateful I am for all of you, whether near or far. I get to see Pastor Matthias and Tom each Sunday, as we collaborate on our webcam services, and I hold close to heart all of you who have sent me mailed (and e-mailed) notes, responded to my notes, and generally kept the faith as we have gone through these unpredictable weeks. I am struck by the wonder of snow; music and its healing forces; and my own gratitude for how many good things have happened, each and every day, despite the challenges.

I know you will enjoy the beautiful Advent solo music being presented in December: Mike Bates, baritone; Jaime Dodson, violin; Sophie LeMeur, violin; and Jim Shatek, baritone. Special thanks to Tom Murphy for his technical support as he gathered and/or created videos of these musicians and their work.

Blessings to all of us as we experience the beauty and profound power of Christmas in our lives.

## *Saints in our pews*

Thanks to the inspiration of Pastor Matthias, Jill, Maria, and Joanne, our All Saints Day observation included puppets created by Maria and the congregation in 2013 for the "Boycott Blues" presentation. The viewing worshippers were able to be more "back in the pews" as the camera followed Pastor Matthias moving about the space, stopping by puppets representing singer songwriter John Prine, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Rep. John Lewis, Joanna Cole-author of the Magic School Bus series, George Floyd, and one representing all those who have died this past year of Covid-19. He gave us a brief description of their lives and how they impact all of us, as, like them, we can strive to use our own gifts and talents to live our most saintly lives, imperfect as we are.



*What are our members doing?*

Flamingoes Sarah and Rita trick or treated at two homes in the beautiful Fall weather.

Rita's dad, Sebastian, recently became a new alternate board member for the West Side Community Organization (WSCO) and we applaud his willingness to use his talents and time to build community, justice, and equity on St. Paul's West Side.



*Roxanna fights the corona virus!*

On her birthday Roxy wanted a covid-19 piñata so she could do her part in smashing it to bits. She and her creative parents are always up to a crafty challenge.



## *E-Directory for CPUC Members and Friends in the works!*

Cherokee Park United is gathering names and contact information for an electronic directory. People who share their up-to-date information and give their permission will be included. As an option, you can submit a recent photo or use the one from the 2014 directory, too! We expect anyone who gets an electronic directory to keep information confidential and not share with anyone not listed. A few directories will be printed for people who do not use computers.

If you received an email regarding the e-directory, please edit your listing and return it by November 29. All others can send their information to Jill Jackson before that date. Thank you for helping us keep in touch!

## *Women's Affinity November Zoom*

Wearing favorite head coverings prompted sharings of our lives, where we have been, our history at CPUC, our involvement and passions for service, our work and social lives. Seen were hats worn with the Building Blocks Halloween festivities, received on a mission trip in Haiti, sewn to wear at the Women's March during Trump's inauguration, place-holder for a beloved signature fedora worn working for the Opera, a hat dating back to the 1880's made over to wear by a tour guide at the Cathedral, a fascinating Fascinator. And more, including some no-hatters who were just bored and checked in with us, one of which is living outside the U.S.A.



Editorial from Susan

*Maria ~ Sound of Music, or West Side Story? Both!*

Attending the recent WSCO annual meeting was such a worthwhile experience. Not being a West Sider myself, I have a lot to learn about the wonderful people and plans of this local community organization. Of course, I had to watch, knowing someone from CPUC was to be honored as **West Sider of the Year**, and not surprisingly, it was our own Maria. A short video clip was shared capturing the moment Maria's doorbell rang, with WSCO representatives bringing gifts, balloons, and a plaque recognizing her honor.



There was way too much information to capture from watching a webcast, so that will come in the next newsletter. But for now, we can delight in the recognition of our dear friend Maria, who never wants the limelight. This self-described anarchist can always be found holding someone's baby, cooking for hundreds, carrying a picket sign, planting beans on the boulevard for hungry people walking by, and on and on. She has touched many lives.

*How do you catch a cloud and pin it down?  
How keep a wave to stay on the sand?  
How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?*

*The most beautiful sound I've ever heard - Maria.  
Say it loud and there's music playing  
Say it soft and it's almost like praying*



Thanks to those who chalking the vote to spur us on



As this is the last newsletter of 2020...  
we wish all a holy and safe holiday and transition into the new year.

## **Cherokee Park United Church**

United Church of Christ/Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Open & Affirming, Multicultural, Antiracist

371 W. Baker Street

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Sunday Worship 10:15 a.m., online only, until further notice

Pastor: Rev. Matthias Peterson-Brandt

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