



November 29, 2023

“In Light and Darkness” Our advent and Christmas season theme this year is “In Light and Darkness”. In the midst of early setting of the sun and lengthier nights, we look for, we yearn for the light that breaks through and wakes us each day. Jesus is the Light of the World, and he said that we are, too. That is, the image of Christ, the peacemaking, reconciling, justice bearing actions done the way Jesus did, bring light into the dark places of our lives. We hope you will join us for worship on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. for the tradition of lighting advent candles each week to celebrate the Light that is coming again. Whether you come in person to worship or join us online through the link at www.sjuinted.org, we hope you come! We welcome you to celebrate this season.

An Advent devotional is available as our gift to support your inward spiritual preparation for the season. We hope you find a quiet space and time to set aside for daily reading. It takes just 10-15 minutes a day to read, reflect, pray and give thanks to our Lord and Savior. This year’s devotional grounds daily Scripture and reflections with the practical divinity of everyday life, like feeding, clothing, and visiting those in need. You may wish to have an advent wreath of your own at home this season.

“In Light and Darkness” is our theme for worship this Advent and Christmas, beginning on **December 3rd**, the first Sunday of Advent. “Startling Hope” is the theme that day, with candle lighting and the initial trimming of our **Christmas Mitten Tree**. The mittens, gloves and hats you bring to church will be shared with our neighbor students at Bryant Woods Elementary School. Items will be collected now through December 17th.

The annual **ASP wreath sale** continues through December 10th. Wreaths can be purchased online at [ASP Wreath Order](#) and picked up at the Wilde Lake Interfaith Center on Sundays, from 8:30am – 2pm, December 3rd through December 10th.

December 10th, our Advent theme speaks to “Just Peace”. Perhaps we are hurting over the polarization in our world, or the lack of connection from estrangement, and want to be an instrument of God’s peace in a hurting world. Learn how to make God’s peace known to others and be part of healing a hurting world.

During the 10:30 a.m. worship service on **December 17th**, our choir will present special music and readings from the cantata “I Hear the Prophet Calling”, with the advent candle theme of Joy.

*****New this Year! December 21st is the Longest Night of the Year.** This year, SJU will join with Christ UMC, Locust UMC, Linden-Linthicum UMC and Kittamaquundi Community Church **at 7:00 p.m. at Emmanuel UMC at 10755 Scaggsville Road in Laurel** for a worship service. Designed especially for those experiencing challenges, grief, and other complex emotions this season that need compassion and healing, this ecumenical service is certain to be a blessing to everyone in need of light on this longest night. Through the vision of Rev. Angela Wells of CUMC, with support from all the

clergy, there is a radical welcome to our LGBTQ+ family and community members in need of the wide-loving lifegiving message of Jesus the Christ. Please join us this year at Emmanuel UMC.

December 24th is the Fourth Sunday of Advent – and Christmas Eve. We will have our regular **10:30 am** Sunday morning worship service to celebrate the 4th Sunday of Advent and the theme of Love. At **7:00 pm**, we will have a candlelight service which includes traditional carols and spirituals. We hope to see you!

Sunday, December 31st at 10:30 a.m. will be a special storytelling service for children and families with more Christmas carols!

Every one of these are meaningful worship services to which you can invite friends, family members, neighbors and co-workers! We invite you to remember and experience “In Light and Darkness” this Advent and Christmas season.

Our administrative office will be open every Thursday (and also by appointment) weekly through Thursday, December 28th – the deadline to receive your year-end gifts. We will be closed on December 22nd, 25th, 26th and 29th, and on January 1st 2024.

See you in church!

May God be with you in the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love of Christ this season,

Pastor Mary Ka

St. John United Church • 10431 Twin Rivers Road • Columbia MD 21044
410-730-9137 • SJUColumbia@gmail.com • www.sjunited.org

United in Love – United for Service