



LEADING TODAY'S WORSHIP - *Katy Kristoffersen, Music Director - Pastor Howard Davidson*

Meditation Before Worship

The Christmas message is that there is hope for ruined humanity – hope of pardon, hope of peace with God, hope of glory – because at the Father's will, Jesus Christ became poor, and was born in a stable so that thirty years later he might hang on a cross. – J. I. Packer

Hope is a confident, alert expectation that God will do what he said He will do. – Eugene Petersen

WELCOME

PASTOR HOWARD DAVIDSON

PRELUDE *Instrumental Music*

KATY KRISTOFFERSEN, PIANO

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

WORDS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

*To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see.
It was by their faith that people of ancient times won God's approval.* HEBREWS 11:1-2 (GNT)

Pastor: Peace be with you.

People: **And also, with you.**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

ELLIOT KRISTOFFERSEN & VINCE SNOWBARGER

Reader: "We light the first candle of Advent, the Candle of Hope, to remind us of the hope that the people of Israel had for the coming of the Messiah."

Reader: "The Prophet Isaiah foretold this to the people of God long ago as recorded in Isaiah 7:14. The Prophet Isaiah said, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Emmanuel.""

Congregation: God of hope, as we begin Advent, we are tempted to get carried away with gift buying, parties, and decorating. Help us to remember daily that you are the reason for our preparations. Center our hearts on you, the Hope of the world. Jesus, in your Holy name we pray. Amen."

WELCOMING SONG*

CONGREGATION

HYMN NO. 154 Verse 1: All
Verse 2: Men
Verse 3: Women
Verse 4: All

*Indicates we stand - if it is comfortable

¹Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²He has brought us by faith into this experience of God's grace, in which we now live. And so, we boast of the hope we have of sharing God's glory! ³We also boast of our troubles, because we know that trouble produces endurance, ⁴endurance brings God's approval, and his approval creates hope. ⁵This hope does not disappoint us, for God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to us.

Leader: This is the word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM *Prepare the Way, O Zion* (Frans Mikael Franzen, words; Then Swensak Psalmboken, 1697)

UCSJ CHOIR

Prepare the way, O Zion, your Christ is drawing near!
 Let every hill and valley a level way appear.
 Greet One who comes in glory, foretold in sacred story.
 Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most holy name.

He brings God's rule, O Zion; he comes from heaven above.
 His rule is peace and freedom, and justice, truth, and love.
 Lift high your praise resounding, for grace and joy abounding.
 Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most holy name.

Fling wide your gates, O Zion; your Savior's rule embrace.
 His tidings of salvation proclaim in every place.
 All lands will bow before him, their voices will adore him.
 Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most holy name.

SCRIPTURE EPHESIANS 1:15-20

PASTOR HOWARD DAVIDSON

¹⁵For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

Open Your Eyes!

PASTOR HOWARD DAVIDSON

*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you,
the riches of this glorious inheritance in his holy people.*

EPHESIANS 1:19

RESPONDING TO GOD'S GRACE WITH OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Thank you for your continued support of the church through your gifts, tithes, and offerings.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

For the blessings of this and all our days, we thank you, gracious God. Accept, we pray, not just this money but also our lives freely offered in gratitude for all you have done for us. Use them both, in this place and wherever you might take us. Amen.

DOXOLOGY*

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Christ, all people here below;
Praise Holy Spirit evermore;
Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen

JOYS AND CONCERNS OF THE PEOPLE

PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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 sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SENDING SONG *The King of Glory Comes* (Willard F. Jabusch, words; Israeli folk song; ar. John Ferguson) CONGREGATION

HYMN NO. 159 All Verses

BLESSING

PASTOR HOWARD DAVIDSON

*Beyond the darkness, there is a star.
Beyond the noise, there is an angel song.
Beyond the rush, there is a wondrous stillness.
May the God of Advent days
Touch your lives with hints of a holy night.*

POSTLUDE *Instrumental Music*

KATY KRISTOFFERSEN, PIANO

*Indicates we stand - if it is comfortable

Pastor: We live in a world that almost seems to conspire to crush out any sense of hope within us.

Congregation: We choose to live into the hope centered on a babe born in Bethlehem.

Pastor: We are surrounded by people who are under stress and for whom hope often seems to be a distant object.

Congregation: We choose to see the world with the hope from the eyes of our hearts and commit to sharing the hope of Christ with those who need encouragement.

Pastor: Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. **HEBREWS 13:20-21**

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OUR MISSION

- We are a loving and compassionate church family that *respects the dignity and integrity* of each individual.
- We find our joy and meaning through faith in God and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- We seek to promote Christian unity and to encourage understanding and cooperation with those from different traditions.
- We seek to foster deeper relationships with God and each other through worship, fellowship, growth and service.



WE ARE AFFILIATED WITH

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA ~ THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH ~ THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA



Church Office hours: Tuesday—Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

www.ucsjridgway.org . 970-626-5803 . P.O. Box 295 . 295 N. Lena Street . Ridgway CO 81432 . Facebook/UCSJridgway

MUSIC

Katy Kristoffersen, Director
ucsjmusic@gmail.com

OFFICE

Anita Posey, Admin. Assistant
ucsjoffice@gmail.com