

THE  
**United Church**  
OF THE **San Juans**



**FIRST SUNDAY  
AFTER CHRISTMAS**

**DECEMBER 31, 2023**

**MEDITATION**

*Each year's regret are envelopes in which messages of hope are found for the new year.*

— John R. Dallas, Jr.

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

TIM SPANGLER

**PRELUDE** *Sing We Now of Christmas* (French carol)

KIM LUNDGREN AND KATY KRISTOFERSEN, PIANO

**CALL TO WORSHIP** *from* LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23

TIM SPANGLER

Leader: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end.

**People: They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.**

Leader: “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”

**People: The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.**

Leader: Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us be souls who seek our Creator. Let us worship God!

**OPENING HYMN** *Go, Tell It on the Mountain* (John W. Work, words; African-American spiritual)

**HYMN NO. 218 All Verses**

**PRAYER OF PRAISE**

DEE MOORE

Loving God, as we end one year and begin another, we celebrate our life in your Spirit. We praise you that in this past year you have walked with us in times of challenge as well as in times of joy. We give you thanks for leading us along your Way of Love, and keeping our feet on your path of peace. On this last day of the year, receive our deep gratitude for the life we share in your Son Jesus Christ. As we walk into this new year, keep us focused on Your Way of love. May we walk with you into the new year in hope, peace, joy, and love in Jesus' name. Amen.

**HYMN** *The First Noel* (English carol; W. Sandys' Christmas Carols, 1833)

**HYMN NO. 229 Verses 1 and 6**

<sup>1</sup>But now thus says the Lord,  
     he who created you, O Jacob,  
     he who formed you, O Israel:  
 Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
     I have called you by name, you are mine.  
<sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be  
 with you;  
     and through the rivers, they shall not  
 overwhelm you;  
 when you walk through fire you shall not  
 be burned,  
     and the flame shall not consume you.

<sup>18</sup>Do not remember the former things,  
     or consider the things of old.  
<sup>19</sup>I am about to do a new thing;  
     now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
 I will make a way in the wilderness  
     and rivers in the desert.  
<sup>20</sup>The wild animals will honor me,  
     the jackals and the ostriches;  
 for I give water in the wilderness,  
     rivers in the desert,  
 to give drink to my chosen people,  
<sup>21</sup>the people whom I formed for myself  
 so that they might declare my praise.

PRAYER

LISA YOUNG

**God of all creation, you bring new things out of what has been. You make a way for fullness of life in the wildernesses we create. Open our eyes to see you at work. Open our minds to recognize and follow you. Open our hearts that we may receive the living water of your Spirit in our lives and share it with the world around us. Amen.**

HYMN    *Down to Earth, as a Dove* (Fred Kaan, words; *Piae Cantiones*, 1582)

HYMN NO. 204    All Verses

SCRIPTURE READING    JOHN 1:1-18

ANGELA TODD

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup>(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.") <sup>16</sup>From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup>The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

## PRAYER

ANGELA TODD

Holy God, we give you thanks that your Word is truth. Amidst all the beginnings and endings in our lives, we place our trust and faith in you. From the very beginning, your Word has been love and life and light. We celebrate that the light of your Word shines even in the deepest darkness and cannot be overcome. We celebrate that the love of your Word can dissolve the most intense hatred and division. We thank you that your Word is made flesh in Jesus Christ our Savior, and we praise you for the life we have in your Spirit that even death cannot take away. Amen.

**HYMN** *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence* (*Liturgy of St. James, 4th c.; French melody, 14th c.*)

**HYMN NO. 232** Verses 1-4

## SCRIPTURE READING 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21

CINDI MYERS

<sup>16</sup>From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. <sup>17</sup>So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup>that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup>So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

## PRAYER

CINDI MYERS

Reconciling God, you make all things new. Each day your mercies and your forgiveness flow into our lives. Each day, you invite us to receive and live from your reconciling love. Open us to your reconciling invitation. Empower us to live from it. And as we are reconciled to you, may we learn from you to live reconciled to one another in your love. Amen.

**HYMN** *Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light* (Johann Rist, words; Johann Schop, music)

**HYMN NO. 202** Both Verses

## SCRIPTURE READING ROMANS 12:9-21

GINI BARKER

<sup>9</sup>Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; <sup>10</sup>love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup>Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. <sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. <sup>17</sup>Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' <sup>20</sup>No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## PRAYER

GINI BARKER

God of New Life, as we walk into this new year and each day it brings, teach us to walk in your way of love. Though we often stumble, order our steps that we may walk with sure faith and trust in you. As we follow you, show us how we may walk with others in this hurting world. Amen.

HYMN *I Wonder As I Wander* (Appalachian carol)

HYMN NO 225 Verse 1: All Verse 2: Women Verse 3: Men Verse 4: All

## OFFERING - CHANGE FOR CHANGE

## CONGREGATIONAL PRAYERS

VINCE SNOWBARGER & TIM SPANGLER

CLOSING HYMN *God's Love Made Visible!* (Iola and Dave Bruebeck)

Hymn No. 226 Both verses

## CLOSING PRAYER

TIM SPANGLER

POSTLUDE *Angels We Have Heard on High* (French carol)

KIM LUNDGREN AND KATY KRISTOFFERSEN, PIANO

## CHARGE & BLESSING

TIM SPANGLER

SENDING SONG *Joy to the World*

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King.  
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.*

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