



Sunday, December 14, 2025
St. James United Church of Christ
St. Mark's United Church of Christ
Rev. Dr. Patrick Schultz, Pastor
Marcus Elliar, Pianist
Scott Siekman, Reader

Our Mission is to help others deepen their relationship with God, become faithful followers of Christ, and to share the message of Christ's love with others.

Bells Ring~Gathering for Worship
Prelude

Call To Worship:

We gather this morning to rejoice in God who does wondrous things, who promises one day all manner of things shall be well.

We rejoice in the truth of the day that all the earth awaits.

We worship in great hope and peace, confident in the promise of joy proclaimed in scripture.

We eagerly anticipate the return of Christ who will right all wrongs and establish peace in all the world.

We lift up our voices in song and story, in prayer and praise, as we remember and rejoice in all that God has done and will do among us.

Come! Let us worship God with joy as we work with God toward the day when all of creation lives in everlasting joy.

Opening Prayer:

Eternal God and Holy God of Joy, we rejoice in the reality of who you are as we live in the joy of your love for us. Our happiness ebbs and flows; but our joy is deeply rooted in who we are as your beloved children. We worship you giving thanks for your grace and mercy. Come Emmanuel, O come. *Amen.*

♪ Hymn

St. James: (#93)

St. Mark's: (#159)

*Arise, the Kingdom is at Hand
The King of Glory Comes*

Apostle's Creed

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary: Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried:

He descended into hell: The third day he rose again from the dead: He ascended into heaven, And sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty: From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead:

I believe in the Holy Spirit: The One Holy Universal Christian Church: the communion of saints: The forgiveness of sins: The resurrection of the body: And the life everlasting. *Amen.*

Light the First and Second Advent Candles:

True joy reflects the love of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has promised to return. Our joy, found in him, endures the darkest of days. Today, we light the pink candle, the candle of joy. And we celebrate Christ's invitation to live in a new kind of Kingdom, where true joy is found not in taking and having but in giving and blessing. A Kingdom rooted in generous, selfless service toward others.

All: Light three candles, let them shine,
Bringing joy, so pure, divine.
Joy in Christ, born to us all,
Bringing joy both great and small.

The joy of the Lord is our strength, and as we wait for the birth of Christ, we rejoice in him – Emmanuel, God with us.

Light the Candle of Joy:

Young at Heart:



First Scripture Reading:

Isaiah 9:2-7 ESV

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.
You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.
For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon^[a] his shoulder,
and his name shall be calledⁱ
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*

♪ Hymn

Joy to the World

St. James: (#120)

St. Mark's: (#179)

Second Scripture Reading:

Luke 2:8-14 ESV

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

*"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

Message:

Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Down in my Heart

Rev. Dr. Patrick Schultz

People's Prayer:

Come to us, O God, as we gather together and pray in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray:

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Offertory Music:

~ The offering is brought to the altar ~

Doxology:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving: (Matthew 11:2-11)

Gracious God of deep joy, even when storms rage and doubts rise, you call us to see with kingdom eyes—to look for healing, hope, and signs of your grace breaking in. In this Advent season of expectation and weariness, we bring these gifts as expressions of joy, rooted not in ease but in trust. May our giving bear witness to your good news: that the blind still see, the lame still walk, and the poor still receive care. Use these offerings and us as signs of your coming reign, lights in the storm, and carriers of joy. In the name of Jesus, our hope and our Redeemer. *Amen.*

♪ Hymn

O Come, All Ye Faithful

St. James: (#112)

St. Mark's: (#182)

Benediction:

Advent people, go now in the blessing of God's joy, confident that the day we await is close at hand and ready to let God work through us in building the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

Go now to love and serve the Lord
in all that you are,
and all that you do,
and all you will be. *Amen.*

Postlude:

COME & JOIN US FOR WORSHIP ON SUNDAYS!

St. James UCC

1st & 3rd Sundays..... 10:30 a.m.

2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays..... 9:00 a.m.

Sunday School at St. James 9-10am every Sunday.

St. Mark's UCC

1st & 3rd Sundays..... 9:00 a.m.

2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays..... 10:30 a.m.

Visit our Church Website: <https://www.stmarksstjamesucc.org>
Worship Services are recorded weekly and uploaded to our church
YouTube channel: St. Mark's & St. James UCC
Facebook: St. Marks & St. James UCC



Our Church Celebrations!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY THIS WEEK TO:

December 16th – Janell Davis, Cole Lodes, Keith Mauk

NO ANNIVERSARIES THIS WEEK

GIFTS ARE DUE TODAY FOR THE GIVING FAMILIES AT BOTH CHURCHES.

TODAY IS CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING DAY.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17TH. Email them to Karen at stmstjoffice@gmail.com

CONFIRMATION CLASS, meets Wednesday, Dec. 17th, 6-7:30 at St. Mark's

ST. JAMES CHOIR PRACTICE – Wednesday, Dec. 17^h, 6:30pm.

**BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18TH, 7PM
AT ST JAMES**

THE FINANCIAL BOOKS FOR 2025 FOR BOTH CHURCHES CLOSES ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 29TH. Contact Sheila Hemb and St. James or Judy Steinbeck at St. Mark's for more information.

ST. MARK'S GREETER SIGN UP is in the entryway. You may also sign up Online at: <https://bit.ly/greeter2026>



For many, Christmas is not “The Most Wonderful Time of Year” as the song goes. It can be a time of sadness or grief, a time of loss and uncertainty. We find ourselves surrounded by Christmas carols, holiday parties, glad tidings and good cheer when actually the season accentuates our feelings of sadness.

Because of this some may try to mask their feelings or feel shame about having them. However, when a loved one is no longer with you to celebrate the holiday, there is often guilt, sadness, and loneliness. Whether you have experienced tragedy around the Christmas season or lost a loved one, a Blue Christmas service can offer some healing and hope.

A Blue Christmas service is a quiet, contemplative service that usually happens shortly before Christmas. It’s all about making space during a season that is noisy with celebration, to acknowledge the “both/and” of our emotions. It’s an avenue of making space for compassion, warmth and care for those who are struggling.

Join us in a Blue Christmas on December 18th at 7:00pm at St. James.



Come and Behold Him

During Advent, we remember the good news of Jesus and why his coming and his return can help us not to fear, no matter what season we are in.

This is a season that is truly for all people—whether you're brand new to faith or have been coming to church for years. This is a time to slow down, read scripture, worship together, and celebrate the great joy of Christmas as a church family.

Come and be a part of celebrating Advent with us!



Our Services and Events

Blue Christmas Service: Thursday, Dec. 18th, 7pm at St. James UCC

Sunday School Christmas Program: Sunday, December 21st, during the 10:30am worship service at St James UCC

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship with Communion:
Wednesday, December 24th - 4pm and 7pm
Both services are held at St. Mark's UCC

Christmas Day Worship with Communion:
Thursday, December 25th , 10:00am at St. James UCC