

The Federated Church

United Church of Christ + Unitarian Universalist Association



Advent 2022

***YOU* ARE WELCOME HERE!**

A warm WELCOME to those visiting or checking out Federated Church!

We're glad you're here! Are you looking for more information about who we are, what we do, or how to get involved? Would you like to meet with Pastor Eric or get connected to others? In the book rack on the back of the pew toward the center aisle, you will find a green or red "pew pad" with a yellow bookmark-sized "Connection Card" inside. Fill it out and place it in the offering plate as they are passed around during the "Offertory," and we will be in touch with you soon!

Federated Church is an Open & Affirming Community

In a time of deep division and vitriolic rhetoric around issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, and where the dignity of people living with disabilities or mental health issues are often ignored, demonized, or turned into a joke, we promise to:

Welcome all people of every age, gender, race, national origin, faith expression, marital status & family structure, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, physical ability, mental or emotional condition, economic and social status, and educational background to share in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys of our church family.

The Rainbow Flag: We proudly display a rainbow flag at the front of our sanctuary as a visual declaration of God's extravagant and inclusive love, as well as of our own "promise of welcome" to all people. Our prayer is that all can be their truest selves here. This flag serves as a particular signal that our church is a safe and affirming space for LGBTQ persons to be, to belong, to lead, to question, and to grow in faith.

Order of Worship | December 11, 2022

All music is from the **Black New Century Hymnal** in your pew back, unless noted otherwise.
We invite you to say “Hi” in the comments and like the video to let us know you’re here.

Prelude

Welcome & Lighting of the Advent Candles

On this third Sunday of Advent, we light the candles of HOPE, PEACE & JOY

Gathering Hymn “Now Bless the God of Israel” (p. 3)

Centering Moment

Sharing Prayers of Joy & for Healing

Silent Advent Reflection

First, you must take a deep breath. Let oxygen dance through your lungs.

Exhale it slowly. Allow the hurt, the shame, the anger to rise up in you.

Let your mind run wild, like a million loose horses.

Let the narratives unfold, unroll, a river of choppy water.

Ask yourself how you got here. Look Down at your feet.

Roll your shoulders back. Remember who you are.

Take another deep breath. Then, walk it back to the beginning.

Instead of looking at your feet, look at hers. Imagine where she stands.

Imagine what he needs. Dry the river of false stories in your mind.

Turn rushing water into a dry creek bed, certainly not clean enough to drink.

Call the horses. Bring them home. Watch as they shake off the dust of the day.

Name what you’re feeling. Inhale again. Now you are ready to choose a better way.

“Instructions for a Hard Choice” by Sarah (Are) Speed

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father who art 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.

Song of Preparation “A Better Way” vv. 1 & 2 (p. 4)

Scripture [Isaiah 35:1-10](#); [Matthew 1:18-25](#)

Song of Preparation “A Better Way” vv. 3 & 4 (p. 4)

Sermon “The Courage to Make Hard Choices”

Musical Meditation

Our Shared Life & Offering

Offering Opportunities

Offertory Anthem

Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God all creatures here below.

Praise God for all that Love has done.

Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

Sending Hymn “Will You Come and Follow Me?” (p.5)

Benediction *Go in the Hope, Peace, and Joy of Emmanu-el: God-With-Us*

Postlude

WORSHIP NOTES

Serving us this morning are:

Pastor: Rev. Eric J. Ogi | **Director of Music:** Gary Mattin | **Liturgist:** Brian Oster

Ministers: All of us! | **Ushers:** Roger Jacobson, Gip Seaver, Judy Winter, & Ruth Olle

Ushering next Sunday, Dec. 18: Nate & Pam Kitterman and Linda Mason

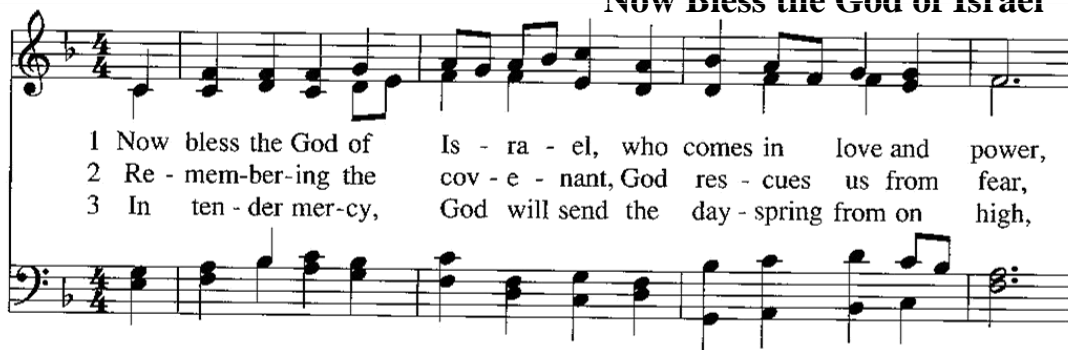
This morning's Candle Light Liturgy and Centering Poem are both written by

Rev. Sarah Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

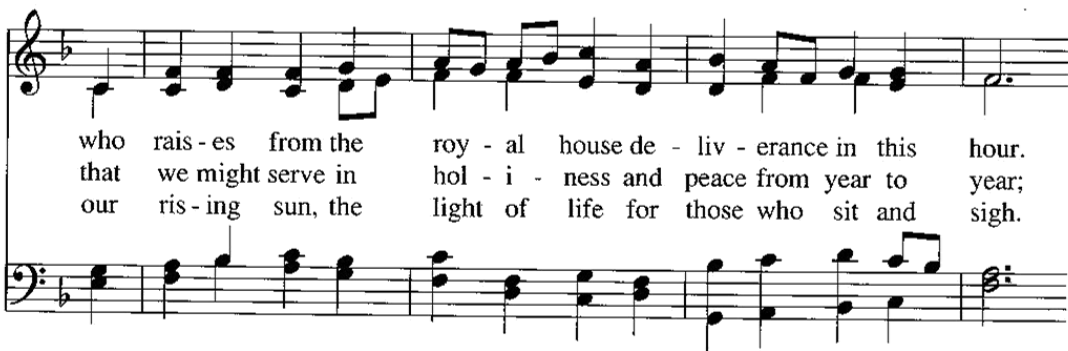
The lyrics for “A Better Way” are written by Rev. Anna Strickland and also come from A Sanctified Art LLC

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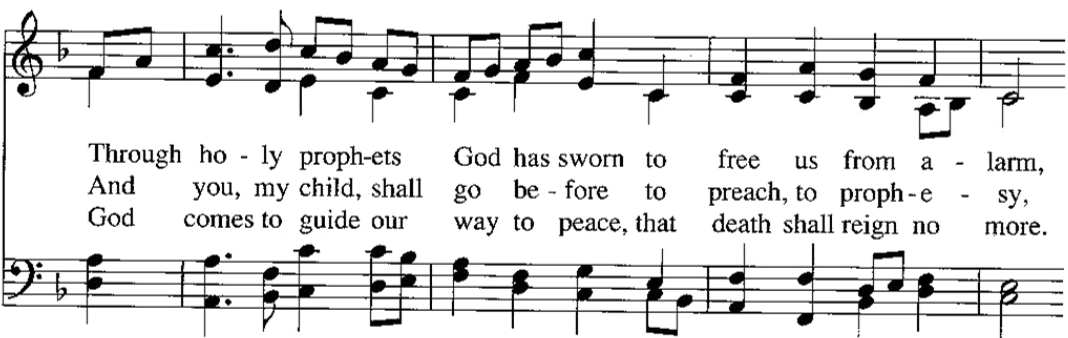
“Now Bless the God of Israel”



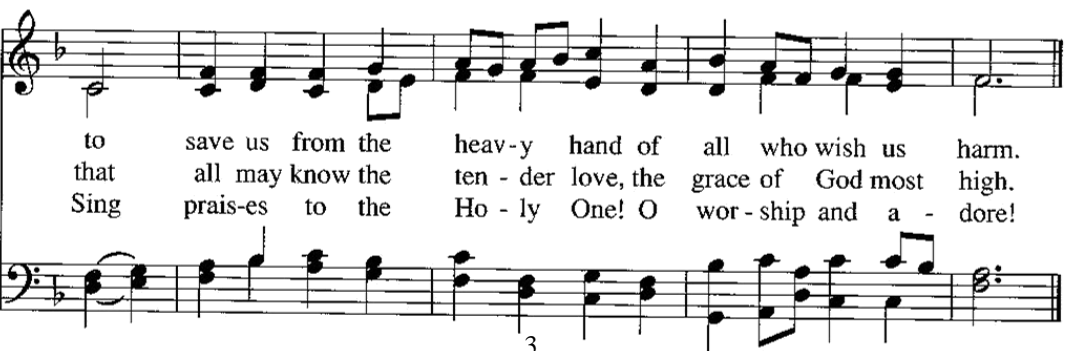
1 Now bless the God of Is - ra - el, who comes in love and power,
 2 Re - mem - ber - ing the cov - e - nant, God res - cues us from fear,
 3 In ten - der mer - cy, God will send the day - spring from on high,



who rais - es from the roy - al house de - liv - erance in this hour.
 that we might serve in hol - i - ness and peace from year to year;
 our ris - ing sun, the light of life for those who sit and sigh.



Through ho - ly proph - ets God has sworn to free us from a - larm,
 And you, my child, shall go be - fore to preach, to proph - e - sy,
 God comes to guide our way to peace, that death shall reign no more.

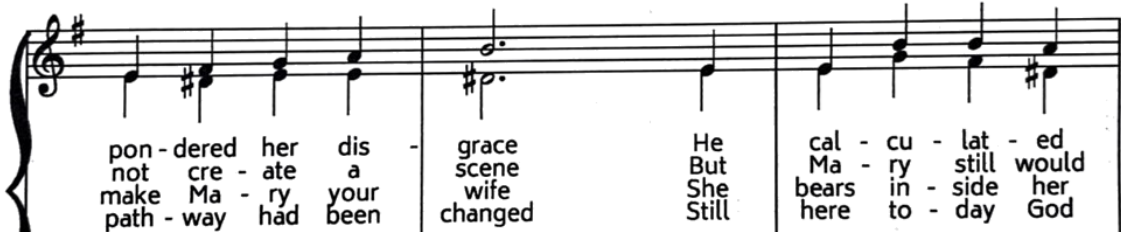


to save us from the heav - y hand of all who wish us harm.
 that all may know the ten - der love, the grace of God most high.
 Sing prais - es to the Ho - ly One! O wor - ship and a - dore!

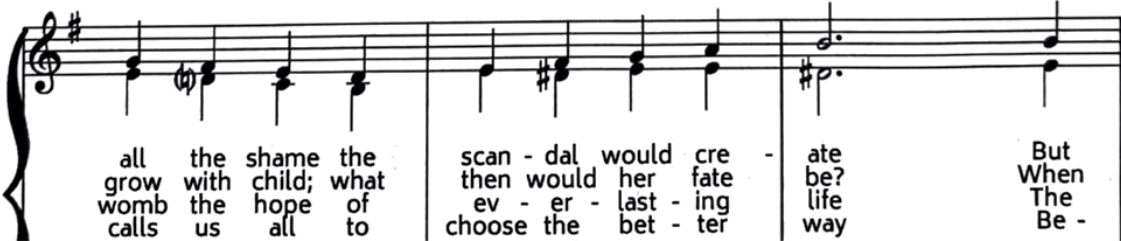
"A Better Way"



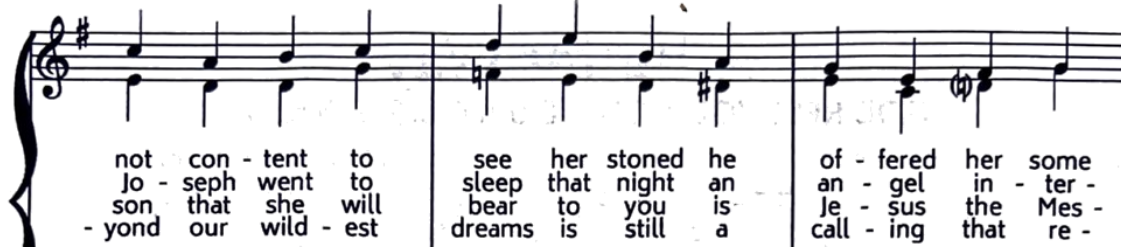
When He Said Like Jo - seph planned to leave her "Jo - seph, Ma - ry's state he
He planned to leave her Ma - ry's state he
Said Ga - briel, "Jo - seph, qui - et - ly fear and
Like Jo - seph woke from do not to find to his



pon - dered her dis - grace scene He cal - cu - lat - ed
not cre - ate a wife But Ma - ry still would
make Ma - ry your changed She bears in - side her
path - way had been Still here to - day God



all the shame the scan - dal would cre - ate But
grow with child; what then would her fate When
womb the hope of to ev - er - last - ing The
calls us all to choose the bet - ter way Be -



not con - tent to see her stoned he of - fered her some
Jo - seph went to sleep that night an an - gel in - ter -
- son that she will bear to you is - Je - sus Mes -
- yond our wild - est dreams is still a call - ing that re -



grace - vened Oh there is a bet - ter way, God's bet - ter way Oh
- siah" - mains



we can choose the bet - ter way

“Will You Come and Follow Me?”



1. Will you come and fol - low me if I but call your name?
2. Will you leave your - self be - hind if I but call your name?
3. Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?
4. God, your sum - mons ech - oes true when you but call my name.



Will you go where you don't know and nev - er be the same?
 Will you care for cruel and kind and nev - er be the same?
 Will you quell the fear in - side and nev - er be the same?
 Let me turn and fol - low you and nev - er be the same.



Will you let my love be shown, — will you let my name be known, —
 Will you risk the hos - tile stare — should your life at - tract or scare? —
 Will you use the faith you've found — to re - shape the world a - round, —
 In your com - pa - ny I'll go — where your love and foot - steps show. —



— will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?
 — Will you let me an - swer prayer in you and you in me?
 — through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?
 — Thus I'll move and live and grow in you, and you in me.

Advent Opportunities

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, Saturday, December 24th, 7pm

Join us for our candlelight Christmas Eve service on Dec. 24th at 7pm.

No Worship Christmas Morning

This year, Christmas Day falls on a Sunday. The Deacons have determined that there will be no worship service on Sunday morning, December 25. Christmas Eve will be livestreamed via Facebook and available to watch Christmas Day.

Advent Bible Study, Mondays, thru 12/19, 5:30-6:30pm, Settle Room (by offices)

Christmas: it's a story many of us have heard every year... and yet, behind the Christmas carols and nostalgia lies a story whose details most of us have missed.

Join us every Monday in Advent (**beginning next Monday**) for an inspiring, challenging, and illuminating series that will transform the way you hear the good news of Christmas!

Membership Informational Gathering, Sun. 12/11, following worship

This gathering is for those who've been getting connected and want to take the next step in making Federated "their church;" who are ready to shift from "receiving" what we do to also taking an active role in shaping who we are becoming and what's next for us!

We realize that different churches approach "membership" differently. For us, it's also very different than membership in other social clubs & organizations. This gathering is a space for you to learn more about how decisions are made at Federated, what leadership looks like (and how these are similar to / different from other churches), as well as a chance to ask your honest questions—like: Why does membership matter?

Cookie Plates

The Board of Deacons will once again offer cookie plates to our members and friends of The Federated Church this holiday season. We will be assembling and delivering the cookie plates on *December 18*. We have a list of those who are unable to get out to attend church regularly or those that are unable to do other "outside of the home" activities. The Board would also like to have the cookie plates be filled with either baked or store-bought cookies at this time. We know many of you have cookie talents beyond what many of us could do. Now's your chance to shine! We'll also be needing delivery people to help take these gorgeous plates to those on our list. If you have any questions or perhaps someone you know that might like a cookie plate, please call the church office (815-895-2706).

“Blue Christmas” Service, Wed., December 21, 7pm, Salem Lutheran Church.

While the world around us has already been telling us to “have a holly jolly Christmas” and insisting that “it’s the best time of the year” for a month, we recognize that for many of us, this season is full of conflicting feelings.

To make space for the full spectrum of emotions this season can bring, Federated and Pastor Eric will be joining with Salem Lutheran Church, Sycamore United Methodist Church, St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, and First Lutheran Church of DeKalb for a joint “Blue Christmas” service. This service will feature an open “pick-up choir” (if interested in joining, just show up at 6 pm on the 21st!). If you’re interested but have questions, feel free to reach out to Pastor Eric.

Advent/Christmas Offerings

Gift Cards to Assist Safe Passage Clients

Federated Church will be donating gift cards from local businesses to Safe Passage, the DeKalb County domestic violence shelter. These cards will help Safe Passage clients to put gas in their cars, pay for medication, purchase clothing for a job interview, and more!

Please consider donating cards from area businesses (gas stations, Walmart, Kohl’s, Walgreens, etc.) in \$10 values. If you would like to give more than \$10, simply purchase more cards. If cards are not available in \$10 amounts, purchase one for the next higher amount. Cards will be used, as needed, throughout the year. To donate, place your cards in an envelope, labeled *Safe Passage* and put them in the collection plate on Sunday or mail them to the church.

December Love Offering: The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross. The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is a Special Mission Offering that UCC congregations have been supporting for over 100 years. The offering is administered through the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Boards. Funds provide direct financial support to those who serve the church and are facing financial difficulties. Active and retired clergy, lay employees, and their surviving spouses may be eligible for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and/or Christmas “Thank You” Gift Checks.

Special “Christmas Fund” offering envelopes are available in the sanctuary or you may send a check to the church office in December. Write *The Christmas Fund* on your check.

Christmas Eve Offering

The Christmas Eve offering will go to the “Pastor’s Emergency Fund,” which is used to support DeKalb County community members in need.

OUR FEDERATED VALUES

We believe in God

At the center of our faith is the surprising, unsettling, and deeply personal God found in the Bible, most profoundly revealed in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. At Federated, our primary interest is not merely talking *about* God, but in *encountering* the Mysterious Force at the heart of the universe. This is a God who comforts us where we need to be comforted and challenges us where we've become complacent. This is a God who will not be confined to dogmatic teachings, nor even to the Bible. We believe that we are invited to encounter this God everywhere: in nature, science, one another, and in other religious traditions as well.

Each person is on a unique spiritual journey

We value faith as a journey rather than a destination. We recognize that each person is at a different place on their journey, so we focus on “testimonies” of faith rather than “tests” of faith; stories of how we are being transformed, rather than dogmas we must affirm. Here, you are welcome to belong, question, explore, and lead whether you grew up in church and loved it, or you've had a painful relationship with Christianity; you are welcome whether you feel your faith is unshakeable or you're not sure if you believe in God at all. You are welcome to join a community of people “on the way”: encouraging and caring for one another, learning and growing together, and serving alongside each other as we build, in some small way, the world we believe God dreams of.

Building authentic community across our differences

We are an “Open and Affirming” congregation, which is our way of saying that we value diversity. In a time of deep division, we believe it is paramount to gather people from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and identities in order to build authentic relationships and community. We believe that the simple but courageous work of showing up and being together in this way is one necessary element in healing our nation and world's deep divisions.

We believe in peace through justice

In this congregation, conversations regarding racism, sexism, poverty, war, immigration, homophobia, hunger, abuse, and a host of other issues are commonplace, both from the pulpit and around the table. We know that the Realm of God is not being experienced on earth so long as people are being hurt. With Martin Luther King Jr., we believe that we are all “caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny,” and that “none of us can be free until all are free.” Which means that, as a community, we have a God-given responsibility and mission to work for justice and healing in our neighborhood and beyond. Jesus says: “I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). This work is defined not merely by what we are against, but the vision we are for—flourishing for *all*!

“Welcoming Any, Loving All”

*The Federated Church is affiliated with two national denominations:
the United Church of Christ & the Unitarian Universalist Association*



Follow us on
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www.fedsycamore.org

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