

**THE**  
**Federated Church**  
**OF SYCAMORE**



What do  
you fear?  
INSISTING ON HOPE

Advent - Epiphany

# Responding to God's Invitation: Prayer Stations

*Advent is an invitation to journey into our deepest longings; to move toward those places in our world and within ourselves shrouded in darkness. Here, we hear the whispers of angels delivering a surprising message: "do not fear." Rather than denying our fears, these prayer stations invite you to hear this as an invitation to move through—and thus beyond—them; this is what it looks like to insist on hope. During this time (~10 min), we invite you to freely visit these virtual prayer stations. Take your time. This is a "pilgrimage of the soul." Rather than trying to visit every station, linger where your heart feels called.*

*Virtual prayer stations indicated in **blue** can be found at [this link](#) or at the end of the bulletin. Join us in worship to experience the additional prayer stations.*

**Dwelling in the Darkness:** *Advent is a time of watchful waiting. Such seasons can be agonizing. Yet even in this darkness, God is present. In your pew, meditate on the poem and prompt inserted in the bulletin (p.6-7).*

**Divine Seeing:** *Pause to look more deeply at the artwork (p.8-9) inspired by today's scripture. Consider the artist's statement as you look at the art.*

**Prayer Candles:** *Light a candle and offer a prayer for a loved one or a people / place around the world who are weary, afraid, grieving, or suffering.*

**Naming our Fears:** *Write a word or phrase of something you fear.*

**Welcoming Angels:** *On the angel, write a response to the prompt, which will change with each week. (p.10)*

**Alternative Nativity:** *Because we've heard the Christmas story so many times, it can lose its power. Encounter the story anew as it is juxtaposed with contemporary images.*

**Table of Offering:** *Place your [donation](#) to support our ministries or Mission Offering.*

**Guiding Stones:** *Pick a black stone. Use an acrylic marker to write a word or short phrase that helps guide you out of fear. Leave it for the season as a guide for others.*

**Practices for Moving through Fear:** *Use these resources to help you move through fear this season. Some are more personal and intimate; others are opportunities to dispel fear by acting in faith, hope, and love with/for others. Specific resources will change throughout the season.*

## **Order of Worship** | December 14, 2025

*All music can be found at the back of the bulletin. Please join in reading those parts printed in **bold**.*

**Prelude** “Lo, How A Rose E’er Blooming” *K Gesangbuch/arr. M. Hayes*

### **Welcome & Lighting of the Advent Candles**

In a world full of fear,

Where do you see glimmers of joy?

**We see glimmers of joy in birthday candles and homemade cards,**

**We see joy in the laughter of children and the delight of grandparents.**

**We see joy in meals around the table,**

**And in the singing of Christmas songs.**

You are right.

Even in a fear-filled world,

**Joy is all around us—if we have hearts to see.**

So, today we light the candles of hope, peace, and joy

As a reminder of this good news.

*the candles of HOPE, PEACE, and JOY are lit*

May this flicker of light help us to remember and notice:

**Even in a fearful world, joy is here.**

**Thanks be to God! Amen!**

### **Passing the Peace**

*We invite you to like the video and/or say “Hi!” in the comments to let us know you’re here.*

**Gathering Hymn** “Come As You Are” (p.3)

### **Prayers of the People**

#### **Silent Prayer & The Lord’s Prayer**

**Our Father/Mother/Parent who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

**Your kin(g)dom come, your 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**Song of Illumination** “Do Not Fear” (p.4)

**Scripture** [Jeremiah 1:4-10; Luke 1:26-39](#)

**Sermon** “Do It Afraid”

**Musical Meditation**

“Plowshare Prayer”  
*Solo by Gibson Cima*

*Spencer LaJoye*

**Responding to God’s Invitation: Prayer Stations** *(see inside bulletin cover)*

**Our Shared Life: Offering Invitations**

**Blessing & Sending the Nguyen Wheeler Family**

**Sending Hymn** “Do It Afraid” *(p.4)*

**Benediction**

**Postlude** “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus” *R.H Prichard/arr. M. Hayes*  
*Thank you for joining us for worship today!*

† † †

## **WORSHIP NOTES**

*Serving us this morning:*

**Pastor:** Rev. Eric J. Ogi | **Ministers:** All of us! | **Music Director:** Gary Mattin  
**Children’s Church Director:** Bill O’Hagan | **Childcare Support:** Janis Schnurr-Trebe  
**Liturgist:** Sharon McKee | **Ushers:** Ruth Olle and Gip Seaver

*Ushers for Sunday, Dec. 21: Pam & Nate Kitterman, Linda Mason, and Allison Stahl*  
*All music is used with permission: CCLI Copyright: #3234671; CCLI Streaming: #22467093*

## **CONGREGATIONAL NOTES**

*Church Leadership for August 2025 – August 2026:*

**Moderator:** Gip Seaver | **Assoc. Moderator:** Bill O’Hagan | **Past Moderator:** Chris Borresen. | *Should you have any questions concerning the church, how to get involved, or who to contact about something, please reach out to one of them or Pastor Eric, and they will get you the information you or connect you to someone who can.*

# "Come As You Are" by Lenora Rand & The Many

1. Come, you who've been wound-ed, all you who've lost hope.

5 Come, you who are long-ing for what you do not know. 2. Come, you hun-gry for jus-tice.

8 ach-ing for heav-en on earth. Come, you who've been tossed a-side, don't re-

10 mem-ber what you're worth. *refrain* Come as you are. Come you wear-y, come and

12 lay your bur-dens down. Come as you are. Bring your hopes, bring your

14 doubts and your scars. Come as you are.

17 3. Come, you who've been cast out, all you who've been shamed. Come, you who are look-ing for that

20 my-st'ry you can't name. 4. Come, you cry-ing for mer-cy, hop-ing for peace on earth.

23 Come you car-ry-ing ques-tions, *to refrain* all you who've been so hurt.

## “Do Not Fear” by Hannah Rand

Do not fear: I am here. I know you by heart. Just

as you are, you are Mine. I know you by heart. Your

name is written on the palm of My hand.

Do not fear: I am here. I know you by heart.

## “Do It Afraid” by Bryan Sirchio

1. SOME - TIMES WE JUST DO IT A - FRAID. WHEN THE FEAR WON'T

4 GO A-WAY, THEN WE JUST DO IT AN - Y - WAY. SOME-TIMES WHEN THE FEAR'S STILL

7 THERE, THEN WE OF-FER UP A PRAYER FOR A WAY TO BE BRAVE, AND JUST DO IT A - FRAID.

10 DO IT A - FRAID. DO IT A - FRAID. DO IT A - FRAID.

13 DO IT A - FRAID.

# AT A GLANCE: COMING UP AT FEDERATED

## **Luminary & Candlestick Making Workshop** | Wed. 12/17, 5-7pm

Join us for a meditative, intergenerational workshop bringing light into the deepening darkness. Pizza will be provided beginning at 5:30. Come and go as needed.

## **30th Annual Federated Preschool Cookie & Candy Sale** | Friday, 12/19, 9am-3pm

Stop by church to support the preschool's fundraiser & purchase an array of cookies!

## **Pickup Choir of "Angels Hovering 'Round"** | Sunday, 12/21, Run-through @ 9:20 am

Calling all singers! Sheet music on the piano and in the eNews. Recording in eNews.

## **Christmas Eve worship with Candlelight** | Wednesday, December 24, 5:30pm

## **A No-Rehearsal, Quite Silly, Somewhat Accurate Intergenerational Xmas Pageant** |

Sunday, December 28, during worship: *Little more info from enews...*

## **Life in Gaza, Life as a Refugee in the US** | Sunday, 01/04, after worship

Ahmed Elqattawi will speak about his life as a Palestinian from Gaza, what it's like to be a refugee in the United States right now, and what we can do to support people like him.

## **Birthday Kit Assembly & Board/Dice/Card Games** | Sat., 01/17, 1-4pm

Help assemble Birthday Kits for area food pantries & after play some games.

### **Weekly eNews**



Scan the code at the left  
to see the most recent  
eNews & to subscribe.

### **Church Calendar**



Scan the code at the right  
to see the church's  
Master Calendar of events.



## **Waiting in the Darkness**

### **“The First Step”**

Watch any parent. It starts with the first step.  
They kneel down. They smile with anticipation.  
They reach for their baby, calling and cooing them forward.  
And then before they know it, they're running behind a bike.  
They're yelling, *“Keep pedaling! You got it! I'm right here!”*  
And they're jumping up and down,  
because that little red helmet passed the mailbox.  
And then, just like that,  
they're driving circles in the church parking lot.  
They're giving instructions about easing on and off the pedal.  
They're having conversations about curfew and heartbreak.  
And then, before they know it, they're standing in a hospital room.  
Their heart is bursting. And they say, *“Put her head right here.  
Rock her gently. Do you remember the nursery rhymes?  
You were born for this.”*

The first step is always the hardest,  
but you, beloved, were born for this.

by Rev. Sarah Speed



## Even in our fear, we are called forward

*Reflect silently and/or journal:*

on a time when you said “yes” to an invitation that scared you.

How did you move through your fears?

What did you learn or gain through that process?

*What are my eyes most drawn to?  
What emotions/feelings does this bring up for me?  
What might God be saying to me through all of this?*





EVEN IN OUR FEAR,  
WE ARE CALLED FORWARD

## “Mary’s Yes”



In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, the angel goes to Nazareth to find Mary. I was six months pregnant with my second daughter when I reread this scripture and began this image, so at first, this detail seemed like a happy coincidence. But as I pondered it, I wondered if Elizabeth’s pregnancy might have everything to do with Mary’s willingness to say yes to this wild, wonderful—but risky and terrifying—undertaking.

Elizabeth’s pregnancy provides reassurance that Mary can trust the angel’s impossible news. By the sixth month, Mary will be able to see for herself that Elizabeth is truly pregnant. By the sixth month, Mary can place her hands on Elizabeth’s belly and giggle as the baby leaps and kicks. By the sixth month, the risk of miscarriage has significantly decreased. By the sixth month, Elizabeth will be emotionally, mentally, and physically preparing for birth. Her miracle is real, even as it is yet to be born. Therefore, Mary can rest her hope in an emerging—not empty—promise.

Mary’s willingness to say “yes” is also fortified by the assurance that she is not stepping forward alone. Even as fears surely surround her, Mary will go to Elizabeth for protection and comfort. She won’t fulfill her calling without support. Her hope will be strengthened in solidarity.

In this image, we see the angel greeting Mary in the form of dappled light. Mary’s back is turned to the angel, but we see her in the process of pivoting toward the warmth of the cascading light. I imagine this is the moment after the angel responds to her initial question, “How can this be?” After hearing the angel’s response, Mary closes her eyes, imagining her cousin Elizabeth and perhaps her many ancestors holding her up as she prepares to step forward. The wrap around her head carries the angel’s good news, anointing her with the promise that fear won’t stop her. Embroidered along her neckline is Mary’s willing response: “Here I am.” Her lantern earring is a sign to each of us, to anyone who is fearful. It’s as if Mary herself becomes a lantern, emanating courage in the face of a fearful calling, lighting a way forward.

In the Bible, “angels” are messengers from God inviting us to move toward something necessary—but also scary—which is why they always say, “do not be afraid.” In fact, “do not be afraid” may be *the* message they bring.

How will we spend these days of waiting for God’s Love to be born? If we answer the angels’ call, we’ll spend it acting on hope, not fear. We’ll proclaim peace when others exploit our anxieties. We’ll cultivate courage and joy, undeterred by the powers of evil.

*Advent III:*

*What would you do if you were not afraid?  
(list a few, big or small)*



# 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 *encountering* the Mysterious Force at the heart of the universe. This is a God who 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.

## **We believe 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.

## **We believe in 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 across lines of difference—race, class, culture, citizenship status, gender, sexuality, age, and ability—not merely to tolerate each other, but to build authentic relationships and true belonging. We believe the simple but courageous work of showing up in this way is one necessary element in healing our nation and world's deep divisions.

## **We believe in working for peace through solidarity & justice**

At Federated, conversations about racism, sexism, transphobia, poverty, immigration, hunger, and a host of other issues are commonplace—from the pulpit and around the table. With Dr. King, we believe 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.” In this spirit, *in 2025 our Leadership Board initiated a series of conversations with the congregation, and together we discerned a mission priority for the church to act for “immigrant justice,” adopting this covenant to guide us: “As a community of faith, we commit to protecting our migrant neighbors through acts of sanctuary, solidarity, and justice. We will not stand by in the face of unjust enforcement. We will act, love, and speak as our faith commands—with courage and compassion.”*

# ***“Welcoming Any, Loving All”***

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



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