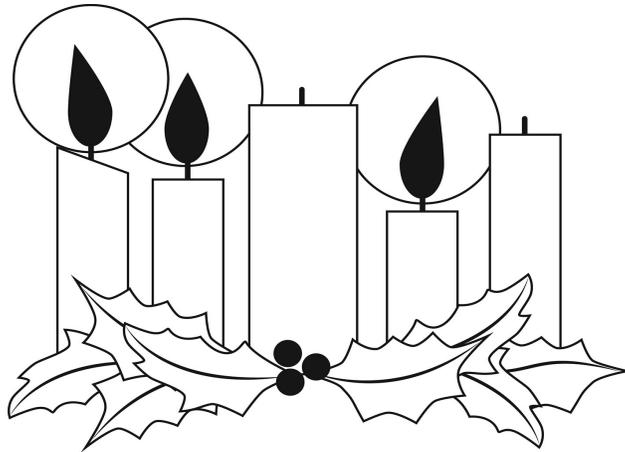


**Covenant Presbyterian Church  
Butler, Pennsylvania**



THIRD SUNDAY  
OF  
*Advent*

**December 17, 2017**

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The Rev. Dr. James E. Swanson, Pastor  
Pastor's Phone: 724-752-8383 / 724-712-1407  
Church Office Phone: 724-287-773  
Website: <http://covenantbutler.org>  
Social Media: [facebook.com/covenant230](https://www.facebook.com/covenant230)

**Order of Service for Worship**

**December 17, 2017**

*Third Sunday of Advent*

Eleven O'clock, A.M.



Rev. Dr. James E. Swanson, Pastor  
Organist/Music Director: Beverly Antis  
Liturgist of the Month: Lars Morrison



*The congregation will pray together:*

**Holy One, you are the only true source of our strength and salvation. As we proclaim the good news of the birth of Christ, may we do so with great joy – and may we invite others to experience the joy of your salvation. Amen.**

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

VENI EMMANUEL

**O come, O come, great Lord of might,  
who to your tribes on Sinai's height,  
In ancient times didst give the law  
in cloud and majesty and awe.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel!**

—Latin, c. 12th century  
Trans. John Mason Neale

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 126

*(Pew Bible OT p. 499)*

CORPORATE PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**O God of Life: we have bruised your Spirit in our living; damaged the world given in trust; called into question the relationships of life; and tarnished the image in which we were made.**

**Patient and loving Father: we have not walked worthily in the faith, sought justice, loved mercy or walked humbly with you. We have not followed the pattern of Christ's life nor always loved our neighbor as ourselves.**

**Spirit of life and love: forgive us, and teach us to forgive one another, so that by your grace this broken world might be made whole again.**

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Pastor: The God of all mercy and consolation has reconciled the world through Jesus Christ, offering us true forgiveness for all our sins. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel:

People: **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!**

\*GLORIA PATRI 579

GLORIA PATRI

\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

--United Church of Canada

**We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in the true human, Jesus, to reconcile and make new, who works with us and others by the Holy Spirit.**

**We trust in God, who calls us to be the church: to celebrate the Spirit's presence, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our Judge and our Hope.**

**In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God! Amen!**

\*GREETINGS OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP

SHARING OF JOYS, CONCERNS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION Sarum plainsong, Mode IV

*Creator of the stars of night, Your people's everlasting light,  
O Christ, Redeemer of us all, We pray You, hear us when we call.  
Amen.*

—Latin, 9th century  
Trans. John Mason Neale

FIRST LESSON Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11 (*Pew Bible OT p. 603*)

Liturgist: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

EPISTLE LESSON

1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24 (*Pew Bible NT p. 961*)

Liturgist: Here ends the second lesson.

All: **Praise be to you, O Lord.**

\*GOSPEL READING John 1: 6-8, 19-28 (*Pew Bible NT p. 862*)

Pastor: The Gospel of our Lord.

All: **Glory to You, O Christ.**

\*CONGREGATIONAL CANTICLE NUN KOMM, DER HEIDEN HEILAND

Hymn 14, **vs.3** - *Savior of the Nations, Come*

**You, the chosen Holy One,  
Have o'er sin the victory won.  
Boundless shall Your kingdom be;  
When shall we its glories see?**

—Ambrose of Milan, 4th century  
Para. Martin Luther  
Trans. William Morton Reynolds

SERMON “NO PRIOR EXPERIENCE” Pastor Jim

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 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.**

CHORAL AMEN

*Two-Fold Amen*

Beverly Antis

HYMN # 10 *On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry*

WINCHESTER NEW

PRESENTATION OF TITHES, OFFERINGS & GIFTS

OFFERTORY MUSIC

*Is Your Heart Prepared for a King?* Robert Lau  
arr. Lars Morrison

**Amy Baker**, bassoon & **Lars Morrison**, guitar

\*ADVENT DOXOLOGY - Hymn #36, vs. 4

CRANHAM

**What can I give Him, Poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;  
Yet, what I can I give Him: Give my heart.**

—Christina Rossetti

\*UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**In gratitude and love, O God, we pour out our thanksgiving  
and praise for all your blessings. Receive our gifts and shape  
our lives by your grace so we may be messengers of the good  
news of your love for all peoples. Amen.**

\*RECESSIONAL HYMN # 337

*Isaiah the Prophet Has Written of Old* SAMANTHRA

\*THE BENEDICTION

\*CHORAL RESPONSE *Come, Lord Jesus* Thomas Olivers  
Harm. Ralph Vaughan Williams

*Come, Lord Jesus, Come, Lord Jesus,  
Come, Lord Jesus, Everlasting Christ, come down!*

—Charles Wesley

\*A TIME OF SILENCE

\*CHARGE AND DISMISSAL

Pastor: Friends, as we journey through Advent –  
Waiting and hoping...  
May the God of hope,  
who loves us and gave himself for us,  
fill us with joy as we trust in Him,  
so that in believing, we may abound in hope.  
Now let us go in peace, and serve the Lord !

People: **Thanks be to God!**

\* Those who are able, please stand

**YOU WERE GREETED TODAY BY *Connie Brown***

**JOIN US FOR OUR WEEKLY TIME  
OF FELLOWSHIP !**

...Immediately following worship each Sunday, downstairs in the Assembly Room. Please join us for fellowship (and food!)

Hosting Today: Nancy & Bill Rice

**THANK  
YOU!**

**We welcome Amy Baker** and thank her for sharing her musical talent with us this morning.

Amy is the bassoon teacher at SRU; she teaches the studio students and coaches the bassoon choir. She performs regularly with several Pittsburgh area ensembles, including the Westmoreland Symphony. Amy and her husband David Sinclair live here in Butler. Her “day job” is working as an oncology nurse in the clinic where Beverly is receiving treatment! (Another reason that Beverly needs to be well-behaved and not over-do during this process!)



**THE POINSETTIA PLANTS IN THE SANCTUARY**

**TWO LARGER PLANTS ON CHANCEL STEPS**

Given by Helen Ferguson

*“In Honor of the Covenant Choir &  
Beverly Antis, Choir Director”*

**PLANTS ON THE RISER**

Given by Members and Friends

*in Honor and/or Memory of Loved Ones*



***A form for Christmas Flowers  
may be found in the narthex.***



Please make checks payable to:  
Covenant Presbyterian Church  
marked "Flower Fund" in the memo

A complete list of donors will be published in the Christmas  
Eve Lessons & Carols bulletin, on Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup>.

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*Celebrating Our Heritage*  
**Missing an installment(s) ?**

Extra copies of installments #1 through #31 of "Through  
Succeeding Years," an historical account of the history of First  
Presbyterian Church from 1813-1938, are available in the narthex.

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**Available in the narthex today!**

PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**Week 3 ~ Advent Devotionals**

Each Sunday a new weekly booklet of *free*  
Devotional Readings will be available.

(If you miss a Sunday, or wish to have a weekly  
installment in advance, contact Elsie in the office)

**PLEDGE CARD 2018 REMINDER**

If you have not had an opportunity to return your 2018 pledge  
card, extra cards are available in the narthex.



Please place your completed pledge card in  
the envelope provided and place it on this  
morning's offering plate or mail it to the  
church. *If you have already submitted your  
completed pledge card for 2018 ... THANK  
YOU!*

## ***Committee Meetings This Week***

**Wednesday, December 20th ~ Assembly Room**

**@ 6:30pm ~ Property Committee (*precedes Session*)**  
**@ 7:00pm ~ Session**

## **The New Flower Chart for 2018**

**... *NOW POSTED***

*on the Assembly Room bulletin board.*



Please sign up for any open Sunday.  
The cost is currently \$35 for two vases.

Please make checks payable to Covenant Presbyterian Church. Flowers are ordered through the church office unless otherwise requested.

*Flower forms are available in the narthex.  
Please submit payment with your order. Thank you.*

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## ***Offering Envelopes for 2018***

*...now available in the narthex.*

*Envelopes are arranged alphabetically. If you do not see your name or are new to offering envelopes, please see Tom Davidson, Church Treasurer or call the church office (724-287-7731).*

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## **ARTISAN MARKETPLACE TO CLOSE DECEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>**

*A "last chance" opportunity to find that unique and perfect Christmas Gift from SERRV, the "Fair Trade" people!*

***"EVERYTHING MUST GO" SALE  
AT ARTISAN MARKETPLACE***



Artisan Marketplace is closing its doors. This is the last week to enjoy great discounts on Christmas décor, house wares, Divine chocolate, scarves, jewelry and baskets. **From Dec 18<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup>, there is a 20% discount on everything.**

Stop in and do your last minute Christmas shopping. Not only are you buying unique handmade gifts for your family and friends but you are supporting the Presbyterian Women's missions and SERRV families around the world.

**SHOP HOURS:**

Monday through Thursday from 9:30AM – 4:00PM

Saturday 10:00AM – 2:00PM

*(\*Volunteers available on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday for your shopping convenience.)*

**The Artisan Marketplace shop is located  
at 134-B South Main St in Zelienople, PA**

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***The Noisy Offering of Loose Change***  
*(last Sunday of each month)*

**Offering will be received Next Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup>  
during the 11am morning worship service.**

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SPECIAL OFFERINGS  
CHRISTMAS JOY

The Christmas Joy Offering continues the decades-old tradition of equally supporting the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, which provides much-needed assistance to PC(USA) church workers and their families, and Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges, which enable students to develop their gifts and find their calling. Every congregation's gifts to the Offering are critical to the future of these ministries, especially now when the need for funding is at its height.

The Assistance Program relies for its funding not on dues but on voluntary gifts, legacies, endowments, and one-half of the Christmas Joy Offering. It provides a way for caring Presbyterians to support those who serve the Church during their times of need. Assistance is granted for needs that lie beyond the scope of the Benefits Plan.

Please read the brochure in this Sunday's worship bulletin. *An offering envelope is included with this bulletin and will also be available in the 11am December 24<sup>th</sup> worship bulletin. Please consider giving generously to this offering.*

***The Christmas Joy Offering will be received next Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup> during the 11 am Morning Worship Service.***

✠ ***If you are unable to be with us when the offering is received***, you may place your contribution on the offering plate this morning or during the December 24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve Lessons & Carols evening service.

✠ ***Please make checks payable to Covenant Presbyterian Church***, designated "*Christmas Joy Offering*" in the memo portion.

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## *Worship Schedule*

Next Sunday, December 24, 2017 (morning service)

***4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent ~ 11 am Worship***

Women of the Covenant Choir ~ Lighting Fourth Advent Candle

***Christmas Joy Offering received.***



## ***Christmas Eve***

Sunday, December 24, 2017

***“A Service of Lessons & Carols”***

With Communion (*seated*) and Candle Lighting

Lighting the Christ Candle:

Jim & Karen Swanson & Family

**7:00 pm ~ Festival Music**

**7:30 pm ~ Worship Service**



**December 31, 2017 ~ 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday After Christmas Day**

*Two Worship Services ~ Sanctuary*

@ 11:00 AM ~ MORNING WORSHIP SERVICE & FELLOWSHIP

@ 3:00 PM ~ ALL AREA CHURCH WORSHIP SERVICE

Service & Music based on the style of Lessons & Carols—but less formal. Covenant and other church choirs (including bell) as well as clergy and musicians from area churches will be participating in this joint collaboration in the Sanctuary.

There will be no reception following the service so that those attending New Year's Eve celebrations can be home in time to celebrate the evening!



### Prayer Concerns

**Bev Antis** ~ We love you, Bev! May the melody and harmony of God's comfort bring peace to your soul and strengthen you on your journey.

**Allen Kitchen** (husband of Rev. Mary Kitchen) ~ surgery to remove a tumor on his kidney at Cleveland Clinic has been postponed until December 29

**Peggy Cartwright's Mother & Father** ~ her Dad is dealing with the effects of a recent stroke; her Mom has Alzheimer's

**Diane Dancik** ~ friend of Mary Reefer who has been diagnosed with cancer which has spread to her liver and bowels

**Donna Hobough** ~ keep her in prayer; Donna has Alzheimers and lives at 100 Newhaven Lane, Rm. 6-B

PRAYER CORDON: Tuesdays at 12 noon in the Church Library.  
To request prayer, contact Virginia at 724-287-3920.



*Happy Birthday!*

**Ione Mathias** (December 18)

**Ellie Walchesky** (December 22)

**Robert Marten** (December 24)



***Have a stamp to spare?***



*Send a Christmas Card to cheer one  
(or more) of our church family  
members this holiday season who are  
home-bound or who are  
living out of town!*

**Betty Anderson** ~ 350 Market St., Apt. 215  
Johnstown, PA 15901-1722

**Ray Blaine** ~ 116 E. Muntz Ave.  
Butler, PA 16001-4536

**Norma Jean Brennen** ~ c/o Sunnyview Nursing & Rehab  
107 Sunnyview Circle, Rm. 171  
Butler, PA 16001-3547

**Rosamond Curry** ~ 108 Randy Dr.  
Butler, PA 16002-3827

**Eileen Davidson** ~ 2379 Finlandia Lane, Apt. 17  
Clearwater, FL 33763-3336

**Enid Dunmire** ~ 7356 Country Club Rd.  
Butler, PA 16001-8549

**Pat Foringer** ~ 343 Sawmill Run Rd.  
Butler, PA 16001-8612

**Barbara Foreman** ~ 320 Lakewood Dr.  
Butler, PA 16001-1654

**Donna Hobaugh** ~ c/o Newhaven Court at Clearview  
100 Newhaven Lane, STE 1  
Butler, PA 16001-7925

**Dave Lloyd** ~ 101 Fairlane Dr.  
Butler, PA 16001-3419

**Ruth Lugibihl** ~ 148 Marwood Rd., Apt. 1313  
Cabot, PA 16023-2237

**Bob Marten** ~ c/o Concordia of Cranberry  
10 Adams Ridge Blvd., Rm. 2-F  
Mars, PA 16046-3964

**Dr. John Prichard** ~ 6790 East Calle La Paz, Apt. 3105  
Tucson, AZ 85715-9006

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## Fear Not, You Are Inadequate!

*“He admitted and did not deny it,  
but admitted, “I am not the Christ.” (John 1:20)*

### **A reflection on today’s message**

by Father Ron Rolheiser,  
San Antonio, Texas

Some twenty years ago, while on a retreat, an elderly nun was assigned to me as Spiritual Director. She proved to be a woman of rare maturity, providing the guidance that I needed at the time. Being young and intense, I too easily made a cosmic drama and tragedy out of every ordinary desolation or setback and she challenged me with a wisdom, an earthiness, and a sense of humor that continually helped deflate my pompousness.

At one stage of the retreat, sensing my Hamlet type propensities, she gave me a little proverb: *Fear not, you are inadequate!*

Through the years, that little adage has come back to me, off and on, mostly at times when I have been a bit overwhelmed by my own inadequacy or have been, usually without a lot of success, trying to console somebody else. There is a deceptive depth in that little saying. On the one hand, there is a certain consolation in it. Whether you are a parent, a teacher, a minister, a priest, an advocate for justice, or simply a friend to someone in need, there are countless times when you come face to face with your own inadequacy, when you are helpless in the face of all that you should be doing.

**The fact that nobody,  
save Jesus, is  
adequate to give  
expression to God  
must not however  
deter us from trying.**

At times like that, it is important to remember that God alone is adequate, that you are not God, and that God is more parent, teacher, minister, advocate for justice, and friend than you are.

Obvious as this is, it is not always evident to us, as our history of needless worrying, being angry, feeling overly self-important, living with ulcers, and being chronically overextended give ample testimony to.

Great spiritual writers have always said this. We are instruments, mere instruments, albeit important ones, and, unlike God, we are never adequate to the task. Knowing this should give us some consolation at those times when it seems that, somehow, we should be doing better than we are. However, that consolation, expressed so well in the little proverb, should never give us an excuse to slacken our efforts, be lazy, or to shirk responsibility.

God may be our real parent or real teacher or real friend, but God, in the incarnation, has tied divine power to human hands and human effort. Hence the fact that nobody, save Jesus, is adequate to give expression to God must not deter us from trying.

Be that as it may, this adage, the common sense faith of a very good nun—"Fear Not, You Are Inadequate"-- is itself a prayer.

How so? Healthy prayer functions paradoxically: On the one hand, it connects us to God and links us to divine energy. At the same time, it dissociates us from God by making it clear to us that we are *not* God. Accepting our inadequacy can help bring us to prayer.

It is both healthily humbling and uplifting to accept the fact that we are *not God* and that we are *not asked to try to be*. When we are overly discouraged it is because we have forgotten that truth. When are overly inflated, it is for the same reason.

Over and over again in scripture, we find God's messengers announcing their good news with the comforting phrase "Fear Not!" This Christmas, let us listen again, as the shepherds once did on a hillside far away and long ago to God's invitation:

*Rejoice! ...without fear! God is with you!*