First Sunday of Advent
November 29, 2026
United Church of Christ - Neillsville
Pastor Julie Ruegsegger

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PRELUDE *"Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme"*
J.S. Bach Karen Mohr

RINGING OF THE CARILLON

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CENTERING
Video: " A Thrill of Hope" (Advent Theme Song)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkOjgYLeLHs

CALL TO WORSHIP (inspired by Mark 13, Psalm 80)
Come, listen.
A thrill of hope is calling.
Come, rejoice.
A weary world is healing.
Come, watch.
A bright star is shining.
Come, worship.
The Messiah is coming.

INVOCATION
God of hope, we gather together in this space to encounter you, to encounter the holy saving grace of the Messiah. As we enter this time, we acknowledge all we bring with us: fear, worry, exhaustion, expectation, longing, and we listen for your call to be on guard, to be alert, to watch and wait. The psalmist says, "Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved." May our focus, our presence, and our attention be on your shining face this day as we sing, pray, and reflect in community. And may the thrill of hope far surpass our worry or fear.
Amen.

HYMN *"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"*
#116 NCH (vs. 1-4)

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here,
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!

2 O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight. [*Refrain*]

3 O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
and order all things, far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and cause us in her ways to go. *[Refrain]*

4 O come, Desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind;
bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;
fill the whole world with heaven's peace. [*Refrain*]

PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE
Righteous God, too often, we seek positions of privilege and power for our own benefit. We accept the ways of the world in order to receive validation, acceptance, and temporary satisfaction. Transform our hearts and our ways to reflect your kindom. Grant us courage to live as you demonstrate and empower us for your glory and honor. Amen.

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING
Reader 1: In the midst of busyness, bustling, and buzzing, we pause to breathe and release our burdens. We surround ourselves with candles, lights, greenery, and beauty. May these sights and sounds remind us that we are people of faith, guided by the light of the world. Listen for words of hope on this First Sunday of Advent.
Moment of silence.

Reader 2: It is difficult to gather in this place without acknowledging the hurt all around us.

Reader 1: There are unjust systems and harmful powers in place that diminish life.

All: What can we do? Where is our hope?

Reader 2: Be alert. Pay attention. There are whispers of hope all around you:

Reader 1: in a meal delivered, a hand extended, forgiveness granted.

Reader 2: As we live between the already and the not yet, we remember salvation doesn't happen when all is right in the world.

Reader 1: The Messiah draws near now, breaking into the present through moments of compassion and flourishing.

Reader 2: In this season of holy waiting and wholly longing, we light the candle of hope.

Light the candle of Hope.

Reader 1: Saying goodbye to the powers that harm and welcoming the coming of Christ.

All: May the hope of God-with-us thrill and inspire.

HYMN *"O Holy Night (A Thrill of Hope)"*
John Sullivan Dwight

1 O holy night, the stars are brightly shining;
it is the night of our dear Savior's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,
for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine! O night when Christ was born!

Here and now as God draws near
To make salvation known
Come and join the joyful song
We feel a thrill of hope.

2 Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother,
and in His name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
let all within us praise His holy name.
Christ is the Lord! O praise His name forever!
His pow'r and glory evermore proclaim!

Peace and justice touching earth
We hear the heavenly hosts
Our Messiah's humble birth
O feel a thrill of hope
Here and now as God draws near
To make salvation known
Come and join the joyful song
We feel a thrill of hope.

A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees, O hear the angel voices
O night - divine, O night when Christ was born.
A thrill of hope – on this night, this night divine!

PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION

One: Our hearts cry out for restoration.
Our spirits plead for illumination.

Let us come before God in confession and in trust.

Our salvation is near.

One: Before God and one another,

All: we confess our love for power and control that separates us from one another and from you, O God.

We cling tightly to wealth because we fear vulnerability.

We insist on our own way because we fear change.

We reject love and salvation when they come to us from outside our comfort zone. We follow our own paths

instead of your own faithful leading. Forgive us through your endless grace and guide us into your truth.

Lead us by the mercy of Jesus, who is our way and our life. Amen.

WORDS OF GRACE

One: From the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven, so great is God's mercy for us. You are forgiven, and you are held by a love that will never pass away. Receive this good news in the name of Christ. Amen.

PASSING OF THE PEACE

One: The one for whom we wait is our prince of peace and reconciler of the world. We share the peace with a weary world. We share the peace to offer God's grace. We share the peace to anticipate and recognize God's salvation in our world.

One: The Peace of God be with you.
Many: And also with you.

All are invited to greet one another with words such as *"The peace of Christ be with you,"*
and the response: *"And also with you".*

RESPONSE *"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"*
#116 NCH (Refrain)

Refrain:
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!

CHILDREN'S TIME

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

As you, O God, draw near to us in the birth of Christ, may we draw nearer to you in the sharing of these scriptures. May our hearts rejoice in the ongoing story of salvation—for us and for all our weary world. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

OLD TESTAMENT Isaiah 64:1-9

[1] Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come
down, that the mountains would tremble before you!
[2] As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to
boil, come down to make your name known to your
enemies and cause the nations to quake before you!
[3] For when you did awesome things that we did not
expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled
before you.
[4] Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has
perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you,
who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.
[5] You come to the help of those who gladly do right,
who remember your ways. But when we continued to
sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be
saved?
[6] All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all
our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up
like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.
[7] No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of
you; for you have hidden your face from us and have
given us over to our sins.
[8] Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you
are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.
[9] Do not be angry beyond measure, Lord; do not
remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray,
for we are all your people.

NEW TESTAMENT Mark 13:24-37

[24] "In those days, after the suffering of that time, the
sun will become dark, and the moon won't give its
light. [25] The stars will fall from the sky, and the planets
and other heavenly bodies will be shaken. [26] Then they
will see the Human One coming in the clouds with
great power and splendor. [27] Then he will send the
angels and gather together his chosen people from the
four corners of the earth, from the end of the earth to
the end of heaven.

A lesson from the fig tree
[28] "Learn this parable from the fig tree. After its branch
becomes tender and it sprouts new leaves, you know
that summer is near. [29] In the same way, when you see
these things happening, you know that he's near, at
the door. [30] I assure you that this generation won't
pass away until all these things happen. [31] Heaven and
earth will pass away, but my words will certainly not
pass away.

[32] "But nobody knows when that day or hour will
come, not the angels in heaven and not the Son. Only
the Father knows. [33] Watch out! Stay alert! You don't
know when the time is coming. [34] It is as if someone
took a trip, left the household behind, and put the
servants in charge, giving each one a job to do, and
told the doorkeeper to stay alert. [35] Therefore, stay
alert! You don't know when the head of the household
will come, whether in the evening or at midnight, or
when the rooster crows in the early morning or at
daybreak. [36] Don't let him show up when you weren't
expecting and find you sleeping. [37] What I say to you, I
say to all: Stay alert!"

SERMON "Hopeful Remembering" Pastor Julie

AFFIRMATION OF HOPE

One: Clinging to God's promises, let us affirm the hope that is in our hearts:
One: We believe in God who creates:
All: We believe God shows up in clouds, stars, and budding trees.
We believe God has named all things good.
We believe God's grace appears in the wonders of nature—
life, growth, diversity, dependence, and decay.
We believe God is still creative and active among us and in our world.
One: We believe in a God who sustains:
All: We believe in the promise of Christ, for whom we wait.
We believe that good will prevail over evil.
We believe all will be healed and restored.
We believe in a future with hope.
We believe Christ is transforming the world, here and now.
One: We believe in a God of surprises:
All: We believe the Spirit is moving.
We believe we will witness the inbreaking of mercy and justice.

We believe in unexpected grace.
We believe we are called to keep awake.
We believe the Spirit works through us to renew the world.
One: In this season and always, we live with faith.
All: The thrill of hope persists.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE
….for all gifts of stewardship and creativity:
All: ...receive our prayers, O God.
…for all who await God's great and abundant mercy:
All: ...receive our prayers, O God.
…and for abundant life for all:
All: ...receive our prayers, O God.

PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR
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

THE OFFERING SERVICE
Invitation to Generosity

Offertory *"The Advent Chorale"* Felix Mendlesohn
Doxology *"In the Bleak Midwinter"* C.G. Rossetti
#128 NCH (verse 4*)*
4 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.

Prayer of Dedication
Gracious God, in this Season of Advent, as we wait for the Messiah, we offer not only ourselves but our tithes and gifts as well. May these offerings work to bring about healing, justice, belonging, and the thrill of hope to a weary world. Amen.

HYMN *"All Earth is Waiting" Alberto Taule*
#121 NCH (vs. 1-3)
1 All earth is waiting to see the Promised One,
and open furrows, the sowing or our God.
All the world, bound and struggling, seeks true liberty;
it cries out for justice and searches for the truth.

2 Thus says the prophet to those of Israel,
"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel":
One whose name is "God with us," our Saviour shall be,
through whom hope will blossom once more within our hearts.

3 Mountains and valleys will have to be made plain;
open new highways, new highways for our God,
Who is now coming closer, so come all and see,
and open the doorways as wide as wide can be.

BLESSING
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving
4 I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. 5 For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— 6 God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. 7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. 8 He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

SHARING OUR BLESSINGS AND BURDENS
As we are gathered together as children of God, we are called to share our blessings and joys and our concerns, our deepest fears, sadnesses, griefs and needs so that we may bear one another up and support each other in prayer and Christian love.
needs so that we may bear one another up and support each other in prayer and Christian love.

HYMN *" Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn"*
#107 NCH verse 4 Marty Haugen
4 Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night,
though cold the winter and cheerless,
the rising sun shall crown you with light,
be strong and loving and fearless;
Love be our song and love our prayer,
and love, our endless story,
may God fill every day we share,
and bring us at last into glory.

COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

Go out into the world and keep awake—watching, waiting, and remembering salvation happens when we say goodbye to the powers that diminish life. Look for God's restoration and healing and empower one another to resist despair with the thrill of hope.

May the blessing of God, our salvation, Christ, our peace, and the Spirit, our joy, thrill your heart and sustain your spirit, now and always. Amen.

POSTLUDE

RADIO BROADCAST
11 AM Sunday radio broadcast
on WCCN 98.5FM and 1370AM

This week's radio broadcast is sponsored by Jerry Quicker in memory of his sons, Mike and Paul.

WELCOME

We welcome you to our service of worship!
We are glad that you have joined us on site,
through the internet or on the radio.
We pray that you will hear God's call,
seek to follow Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit.

YouTube link for Sunday, November 29, 2026
https://youtube.com/live/08kC5DMH_gA

ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Sunday, November 29th

- 9:30 AM Worship

Deacon – Sally Sadowska
Greeters – Lydia Schumacher & Karen Northup
Ushers – Jerry Hamm, Ray Weyer
Power Point – Jennfer Erickson
AV – Crispin Hediger

FYI - (for those who are scheduled for PowerPoint/AV it is Suggested that you arrive 30 minutes prior to the church service to get the laptop turned on, allow for any updates, get screen down and start running the announcements).

Following Sunday, December 6th

Deacon – JoAnn Wren
Greeters – Susie Karl, Carole Romens
Ushers – Mike & Debbie Perkl
Power Point – Janice Miller
AV – Emile Miller

Tuesday, December 1st

- 1 PM Bible Study

Wednesday, December 2nd

- 9:30 AM JAM – Children's Christmas Program

PRACTICE will be held on Wednesday, December 2nd from 5-5:45 pm here at our church

Coffee fellowship after worship -

Sign up on back bulletin board

Nov 29 - M.E. & Jim Sjolin
Dec 6 –
Dec 13 -
Dec 20 – Christian Ed Team
Dec 27 –

Annual Budget and Committee Congregational Meeting

On **Sunday, December 13th, 2026** the Neillsville United Church of Christ will hold the 2027 Budget and Committee congregational meeting. This meeting will be held at approximately 10:30AM, in the sanctuary immediately following the regular worship service.

At this meeting the congregation members present will review and vote on the proposed 2027 budget as well as the committee representatives. All are invited to attend.