

THE GOOD NEWS



Points of Interest:

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There is a song called "Mary Did You Know?" The lyrics were penned in 1984 by Mark Lowry. In 1991 Buddy Greene put it to music and signer Michael English recorded it that same year. Since then, it's appeared on country, R&B, and the Billboard Hot 100 charts (that last in 2014). The 2014 version is performed by Pentatonix, and it's my favorite version. But I first heard the song just over a decade ago, sitting in a United Methodist Church during Advent. I cried.

It's a bit embarrassing to admit that the song brought me to tears, especially when reading this from the Wikipedia entry on the song: "The text has received criticism for perceived ambiguity or lack of scriptural or theological depth. For example, Lutheran writer Holly Scheer, in addressing the rhetorical question of the song's title, wrote: 'Anyone who has even

MARY DID YOU KNOW?

a slight familiarity with the biblical account of Christ's conception and birth shouldn't need to ask if Mary knew, because the Bible plainly tells us she did.' Baptist theologian Michael Frost suggests it is the 'most sexist Christmas song ever written... It treats her like a clueless child... Could you imagine a song asking Abraham 17 times if he knew he'd be the father of a great nation?'"

Ouch. And yet, the song, written to the Mother of Jesus Christ, feels relatable to me, and when it asks, "Mary did you know, that your baby boy, would someday walk on water?" I get misty. Because while I'm all for responsible interpretation of Scripture, and quite squarely against condescending sexism, Scripture just doesn't actually say a whole lot about Mary and this God-Child she carried into existence as Emmanuel, literally, "God with Us."

The Gospels of John and Mark don't mention the birth narrative at all. Matthew has an angel appearing to Joseph, not Mary, who says at

1:21, "he will save his people from their sins." Luke gives us this word from the angel Gabriel to Mary starting at 1:32, "He [Jesus] will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give o him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary replies, a few verses later, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord"; let it be with me according to your word." Then off pops Gabriel.

There was no step-by-step unveiling of prophetic details, "on this day he will restore sight to the blind, on this he will die." So when the song, sappy though some may think it, asks, "Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod? When you kiss your little baby, you kiss the face of God," I'm willing to live into those questions with my heart and soul. Because we, as the people Christ was sent to save, wrestle with exactly this kind of question when we think about this babe to born,

when we wait on the revelation of Christ, Emmanuel, God with Us in the world as we do now in Advent.

If there's any part of my faith that I want my heart and soul involved with, it's this: How do I know, love, follow, and understand this baby who became a savior? And if Mary, who we know from Luke 1:29, was "much perplexed by [Gabriel's words of greeting] and pondered what sort of greeting this might be," then we can wonder, too. Because wonder is precious and good, as Mary, little spotlight that she does get, reminds us once again when she

holds that baby in her arms and absorbs the witness of the shepherds (Luke 2:17-19). "When they saw [Jesus in the manger as the angels had promised], they made known what had been told to them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart."

She knew what we all know about Christ, that he is God's own and only, and that he came to save us through love and justice in God's name. It seems Mary also was ignorant, just as we are,

humans all, of the particular and specific ways in which Jesus would work in the world and works still.

This Advent, let us treasure and ponder, let us store the promise of God with Us in our hearts, and let us try to let go of controlling the narrative and instead engage in teary-eyed wonder.



PASTOR NIKKI

CALLING ALL CHRISTMAS TREES

Send pictures of your Christmas tree (or other Christmas decor) so that we can share our homes with one another this Christmas season! Email digital images to info@angolaucc.org, mail them to the church, or drop them in the mailbox in the vestibule. Don't forget to include your name!

CHRISTMAS EVE

SERVICE OF LESSONS & CAROLS
VIA ZOOM, 7 PM, DEC. 24TH



Away in a manger...



PRAYER LIST:

You can send prayer requests to info@angolaucc.org.

PASTORAL VISIT:

If you would like a pastoral visit, please email or call Pastor Nikki at pastornikki@angolaucc.org or 617-512-8692 (text friendly).

The Missions Team is collecting gifts for two families in need this Christmas.

To sign up to purchase gifts, visit <https://bit.ly/FCUCCChristmasFamilies> or call the church office for help.



TUESDAY PRAYER AT TEN

Each Tuesday in December at 10 am, Pastor Nikki will be live on Facebook offering prayer at 10. The prayer will later post to YouTube, for those who are not on Facebook. Visit the Facebook or YouTube pages anytime to pray with her at your convenience.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FCUCCAngola>

YouTube: <https://bit.ly/FCUCCVideos>.

ADVENT TWO WAYS

Join us for three Wednesday evening Zoom meetings in Advent for a listen to a popular Christmas song and a look at how it's represented in the two Gospel accounts of Jesus's birth narrative. We'll meet via Zoom here: <http://bit.ly/FCUCCAdvent2020> on Dec. 3, 10, and 17th at 7 pm.

YOUTUBE RECORDED SERVICE

Compassionate Friends & Blue Christmas service

*via YouTube
December 13
7 PM premiere*

Link to the service to come.
Our YouTube Channel:
<https://bit.ly/FCUCCVideos>



SCARVES, & MITTENS, & HATS, OH MY!

COLLECTING HANDMADE AND STORE BOUGHT CHILDREN'S SCARVES, MITTENS, & HATS

DEADLINE FOR DONATIONS:
SUNDAY DECMEBER 13.



FCUCC Writing Group

During Advent we will enjoy the work of Jan Richardson (<https://www.janrichardson.com/books>) in her Advent work of art and writing, *Night Visions: Searching the Shadows of Advent and Christmas*. Join us here: <https://bit.ly/FCUCCUpWrite>

CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

SUBMITTED BY GAYLE NEWTON, CLERK



Treasurer's Report: Bruce Andres reported that the church had a good month in revenue. In December we need to develop a 2021 budget and he will work with Nikki to go over committee budgets.

Deacons Report: Report on file, contact Clerk, no pressing news.

Trustees Report: The Trustees would like to hire ADT to install a security system for the church. Money is available for this project and it is a good investment. The installation costs will come from the Capital fund. There will also be a monthly fee of \$152.86 to maintain warranty.

Larry's Lock and Safe will re-key the locks on the doors so that a master key will work. Individual office keys will also still work. The cost for this project is approximately \$2000 plus a 10% contingency.

Pastor's Report: Nikki will plan to hold the compassionate Friends service on our YouTube channel.

Christian Education: Report on file, contact Clerk, no pressing news.

Missions: Report on file, contact Clerk, no pressing news.

O&A: Report on file, contact Clerk, no pressing news.

Financial Secretary: Stewardship Sunday will be November 29. The pledge cards will be sent out on November 23.

Pastoral Relations: Next meeting December 6.

Welcoming: Report on file, contact Clerk, no pressing news.

Worship and Music: Report on file, contact Clerk, no pressing news.

OLD BUSINESS:
1.) Covid 19—Nikki and the Covid committee are meeting monthly to determine the way that we gather and the tools that we use to access safety for the congregation. The decision to suspend in person worship was done by electronic vote. There will be no Christmas decorating in the sanctuary this year. We will continue to let the community gather unless a state mandate prohibits it.

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1.) Security system—was approved as a part of the Trustees report.
- 2.) Christmas purse---thank you gift for Nikki, Michelle, and Sara. An announcement will be going out in next few weeks.
- 3.) Store bought or handmade scarves, mittens, and hats donations will be taken until December 13.

FCUCC COUNCIL MEMBERS

Moderator: Liz Andres

Moderator-elect: Linda Mason Bohman

Treasurer: Bruce Andres

Financial Sec.: John French

Clerk: Gayle Newton

Christian Ed.: Jessica Lash, Stephanie Hine

Missions: Babet Ruby, Erin Johnson, Michelle Olson

ONA: Gayle Newton

Pastoral Realitions: Lois McEntarfer

Welcoming: Marj Lilley

Worship & Music: Lynn Syler

Deacons: Bonnie Snyder, Mark Elliott, Lauralee MacLeod, June (Bun) Mayer

Trustees: Gary VandenElst, Steve

Newman, Cecil Fugate, Jim

Wagenknecht

SCRIPTURE STORIES

Join us via Zoom, Thursdays at noon for Scripture Stories with Pastor Nikki. Find us on Zoom at:

<https://zoom.us/j/886794478>
(type it into your browser)

December 3 Mark 1:1-8

December 10 Luke 1:46b-55

December 17 Luke 1:26-38

December 24 Cancelled—Christmas Eve

December 31 Cancelled—New Year's Eve

Calendar of Events

- December 1 8 AM:** ROMEOs via Zoom, <https://bit.ly/RomeosFCUCC>, password 310284
- December 11 4 PM:** COVID-19 Planning Team meets via Zoom
- December 13 7 PM:** Compassionate Friends/Blue Christmas service via YouTube
- December 14 7 PM:** Council Meeting
- December 15 8 AM:** ROMEOs via Zoom, <https://bit.ly/RomeosFCUCC>, password 310284
- December 24 7 PM:** Christmas Eve Service via Zoom, <https://bit.ly/ChristmasEveFCUCC2020>
- December 27 10 AM:** A Very UCC Christmas, movie/worship event live streamed on UCC Facebook and YouTube. Link to come. from our national setting, details to be announced

Recurring Events

Tuesdays

- **10 AM:** Tuesday Prayer at Ten, on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/FCUCCAngola/>

Wednesdays

- **5:30 PM:** Bell Choir in the Sanctuary **Temporarily Suspended**
- **7:00 PM:** Chancel Choir via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/FCUCCChoir>, password 671381

Thursdays

- **12 PM:** Scripture Stories via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/FCUCCScriptureStories>
- **7 PM:** Advent Two Ways via Zoom at <http://bit.ly/FCUCCAdvent2020>

Sundays

- **9 AM:** Worship via Zoom <https://bit.ly/FCUCCZoomWorship> and password 165378
Sunday Fellowship following Worship via Zoom.
- **11 AM:** Limited In-Person Worship **Temporarily Suspended**

Special Holiday Schedule

- Due to Christmas and New Year's, we will not have Scripture Stories on December 24th and December 31st.
- Pastor Nikki is on vacation Monday, December 28th through December 31st. She is available again starting on Friday, January 1st.

DECEMBER

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Email Pastor Nikki: PastorNikki@angolaucc.org

Website: angolaucc.org

First Congregational United Church of Christ, as an inclusive and caring Christian community, welcomes into its full life and ministry persons of every race, ethnic background, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, marital status, criminal history and faith background. As we serve those within our church family, the community and the world in the name of Jesus Christ, we celebrate each person's uniqueness and look forward to the gifts they bring to us.



God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



1 - Vicki Harris
8 - Stephanie Hine
8 - John Yoder
10 - Teresa Smith
12 - Ron Smith

14 - Jane Schmidt
17 - David Syler
19 - Nikki Shaw
22 - Amelia Hine
28 - Anne Watkins
31 - Bruce Andres

18 - Ann and Bill Eyster
24 - Dawn and Erica Mays

December Birthdays & Anniversaries