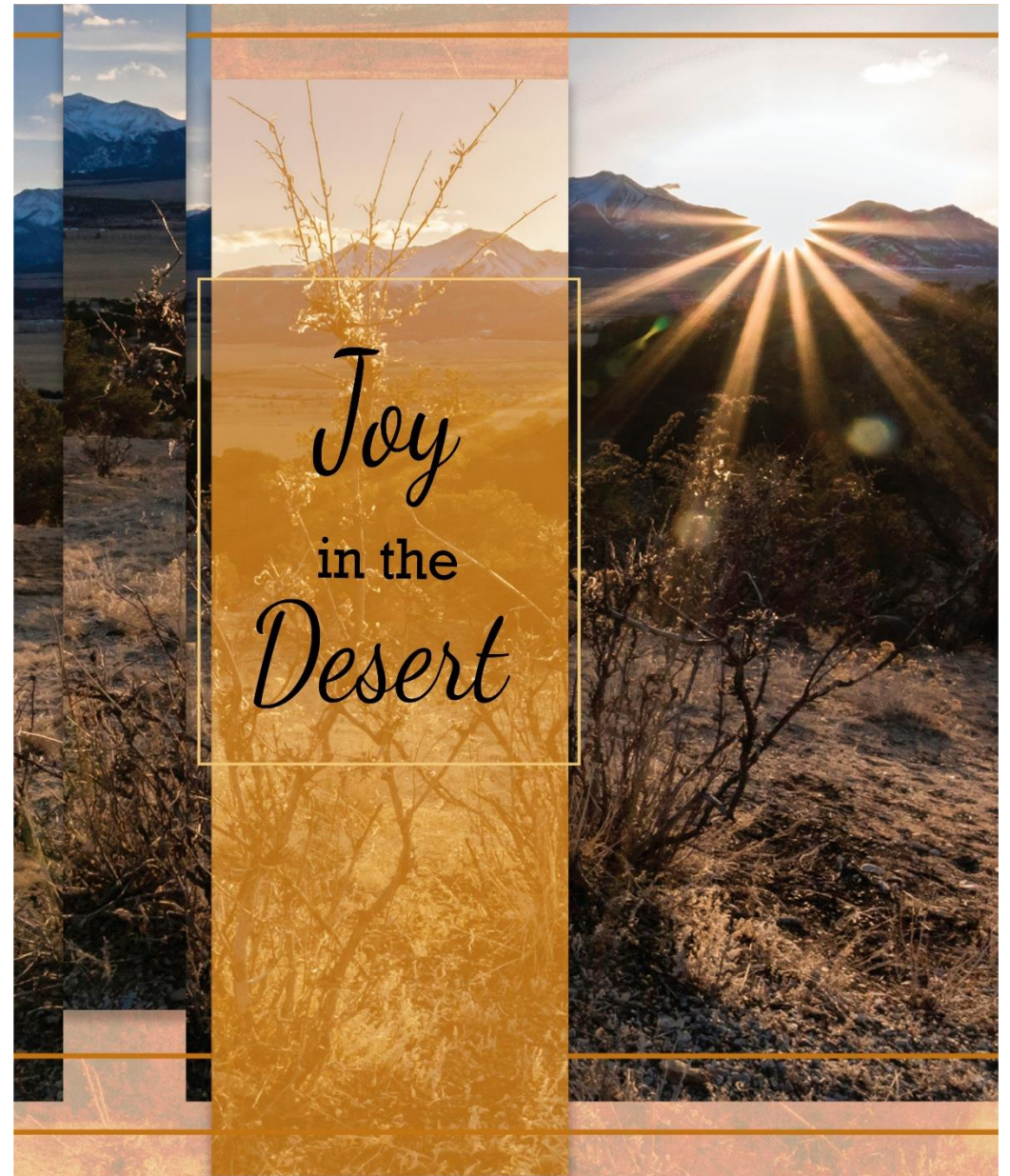




WELCOME TO FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH
of Champaign-Urbana

Following Christ. Nurturing Community. Seeking Peace with Justice.



Celebration of Worship

December 14, 2025



Advent 3: Joy in the Desert

Centering chimes

Prelude *O Come, O Come Immanuel*

*Call to worship (Based on Isaiah 55:1–13)

One: Come, all who hunger and thirst for more—God calls us to the feast!

Many: We are weary exiles, longing for home, caught in a world that drains our hope.

One: “Listen, so that you may live! My covenant is everlasting, my promise sure.”

Many: Can joy reach us here, in this place of waiting?

One: God’s vision is higher than the heavens, stretching beyond what we can see.

Many: The invitation is for all people, from the farthest reaches of the earth.

One: The word of the Lord does not return empty—it brings forth life!

Many: The mountains and the hills will burst into song; the trees of the field will clap their hands!

ALL: You are the source of true joy, O God. You expand our vision, lifting our eyes beyond the moment, beyond despair, into amazement. We stand before you, ready to enter your story and be amazed.

*Gathering Hymn #49 “All Who Are Thirsty”

Welcome & prayer

Praising Hymn #103 “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”

Lighting Advent candles

One: We have been wandering in the dark, cold desert of grief and despair, and we feel heavy, dry and lifeless.

Many: Come, Joy of the world. Come amaze us.

ALL: May your joy water our thirsty souls, that we may become your fountains of joy, freely sharing your joy with the world.

Candle lighting hymn (insert) “Come Hope of the World” (verses 1-3)

Children’s story and offering for the Mennonite Central Committee’s crisis response in Gaza

Congregation sings as children come forward (Voices Together #512)

Embodied Scripture John 4:13-14

Scripture Isaiah 55:1-13

Sermon

*Response Hymn #209 “We Dream of a Turning”

Congregational sharing and prayer (use a mic or text/email prayers to Pastor Michael)

Prayer & Offertory *Joy to the World*

Ushers will pass offering plates down the rows.

Introduction of visitors

Work of the church

*Sending Hymn #277 “As with Gladness”

*Benediction

**Stand in body or in spirit. Children are invited to wave the worship ribbons during the hymns.*

Note: Because worship is participatory and not a performance, instead of applauding please show appreciation for preludes, offertories and special music in other ways, such as ASL, silent applause, saying “Amen” or thanking musicians later.

We welcome, without exclusion, all who seek God’s love and grace . . .

You are welcome here, inclusive of gender, race, country of origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, family status, past imprisonment, education, citizenship status and physical or mental abilities. We encourage you to share in the rituals, fellowship and ministry of this congregation.

Hearing devices (T-coil and over-ear) and large print hymnals are available from the greeters.

Childcare (birth – preschool) is provided in the nursery downstairs.