

Messenger

Changing the world through Christ by caring for all people.

St. Mark's
United Methodist

Our Deepest Gifts

Worship Focus for Advent 2020

The season of Advent begins on Sunday, Nov. 29 and is the time of preparing our hearts and lives to receive Jesus at Christmas. This year, as part of our year-long "Words for Life" emphasis, we focus on the traditional words of Advent as "Our Deepest Gifts." We'll take a look at how the hope, peace, joy and love of God are offered to us in these strange and challenging times. We'll see videos in worship of these words being lifted up as Advent candles are lit and words and prayers are offered. Join us in Advent worship!

Sunday, Nov. 29
Hope

Sunday, Dec. 6
Peace

Sunday, Dec. 13
Joy

Sunday, Dec. 20
Love

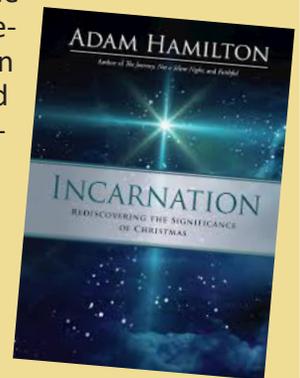


Recorded worship during Advent will be offered at 9:45 a.m. at umcstmarks.org/live-worship, St. Mark's Facebook and YouTube UMC St. Mark's Oro Valley. Watch for info about in-person worship during Advent. Tell others about St. Mark's worship.

Also watch for news about worship on Christmas Eve, Thursday, Dec. 24. We expect to offer two recorded services at 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., and a livestreamed service (with only worship leaders present) at 8 p.m. More news to come soon on those services.

Church-wide Advent Study Begins Nov. 29

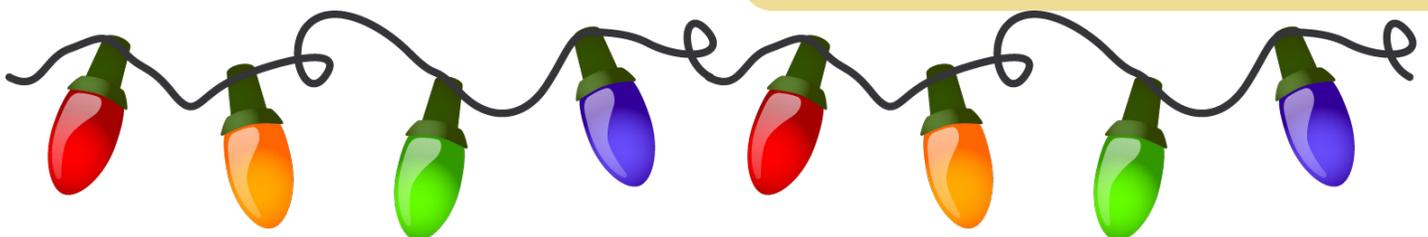
On Nov. 29, we will launch our church-wide Advent study. Adam Hamilton specifically delayed publication of this study to address the times in which we find ourselves. This is the year when everyone needs to take an Advent class, because wherever you are you can sign into Zoom for 75 minutes and discuss your reflections with others from St. Mark's.



Advent is a time of expectant waiting, and in the Christian tradition it is the time of God's fulfillment of the promise to the people of Israel. We await the one whom the prophet Isaiah called "wonderful counselor, prince of peace." His parents called him Jesus. But the prophets, shepherds, wise men and angels addressed him by other names – including Messiah, Savior and Emmanuel. Join us as we explore the meaning behind these titles, what they tell us about the baby whose birth we celebrate at Christmas and the significance of that Christ child for our lives today.

"**Incarnation**," by Adam Hamilton. 4 p.m. Sundays, Nov. 29 to Dec. 20, or 6:30 p.m. Mondays, Nov. 30 to Dec. 21 via Zoom.

Register online. A discounted price of \$10 is available for the first 40 people who register and pay online. The registration form is available at <https://umcstmarks.org/latest-update/>. These books will be distributed on Sunday, Nov. 22 at our Advent Caravan drive-through event. If you register later, you can obtain your own copy from Cokesbury or Amazon.





This Thanksgiving, we have the chance to give a special offering to our church's "Change the World" fund. Our Missions Committee recommended to our church's Covenant Council that the entire Thanksgiving offering be given to the Change the World fund. Covenant Council gave approval to this request at its meeting on Aug. 25.

Change the World Fund

The Change the World fund was established several years ago as part of our Mission Committee's desire to be able to answer the call to provide funds for projects or organizations that are often not in the Committee budget. Sometimes these are situations that are unforeseen, such as the numerous natural disasters in the last few years. In this unusual year of 2020, the need is great for our local organizations and missions. Even

with the generosity of our congregation, our general budget giving has been less than previous years, making it difficult for the Missions Committee to fully meet our planned commitments to local organizations and missions. The Thanksgiving offering will help us fulfill these commitments through the Change the World fund. This fund also helps us provide funds for meal packaging events such as those with "Rise Against Hunger." In other words, the Change the World fund gives us the opportunity to help those in greatest need in our community and around the world.

You may remember that more than 10 years ago, St. Mark's made a decision to give 10% of all our regular offerings for mission work in the United States and internationally. Thanksgiving is a special offering.

To give use the Thanksgiving envelope, and write "Thanksgiving" on the memo line of your check. You may mail or bring it to 1431 W. Magee Rd. Tucson, AZ 85704. You can also give electronically by visiting <https://umcstmarks.org> and click GIVING. Happy Thanksgiving and thanks be to God for His countless blessings!

Celebrate Commitment Sunday During the Advent Caravan

I hope you have been inspired by the 2021 Stewardship Campaign, "Anchored in Hope." St. Mark's and its congregation have been an anchor for my hopes, especially in this chaotic year. The campus has been closed, but through your efforts, the church has remained open.

Working with you and for you this year has been a rewarding experience for me. Seeing all the wonderful things we have accomplished with God's help has made my faith in God and in St. Mark's stronger. New methods and new technology have been put into place, but our mission remains the same – "Changing the world through Christ, by caring for all people." The generous contribution of your time, your talents and your finances make this possible. My hopes for St. Mark's are being realized!

If you have not already done so, please join in the 2021 Stewardship Campaign, "Anchored in Hope." You can mail your commitment card anytime to St. Mark's United Methodist Church, 1431 W. Magee Road, Tucson, Arizona 85704. You can also make your commitment online by email to ruthk@umcstmarks.org.

Or, on Commitment Sunday, Nov. 22, you can turn in your commitment card during in-person worship or during the Advent Caravan from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. (one hour longer than the Advent Caravan time) in the St. Mark's south parking lot. I hope we can make "Anchored in Hope" a success.

"We have this hope as an anchor for our lives." – Hebrews 6:19

Bill Zermuehlen, Finance Committee Chair



Advent Caravan is Coming This Sunday! Drive Through 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

At this event, it's wonderful to give AND receive!

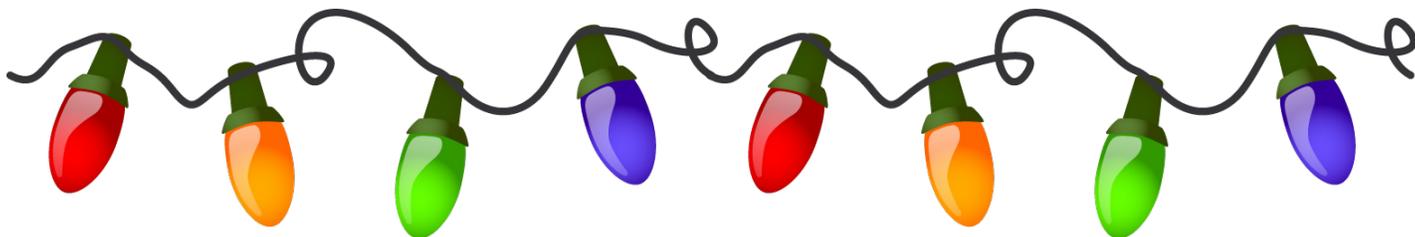
Here is what you GIVE:

- Bring your 2021 Anchored in Hope commitment card to ensure the church is financially healthy next year.
- Bring non-perishable food to help "Stuff the Van" for the holiday needs at Interfaith Community Services. Most-needed items are listed on the church website under "Latest Update" (scroll to the bottom), and there is an emphasis on boxed stuffing and boxed mashed potatoes for the holidays.

Here is what you will RECEIVE:

- An Advent Box with several things to help you celebrate Advent, including an **Advent devotional book written by Pastor Evy**.
- An Advent study book if you pre-register for an Advent study at <https://umcstmarks.org/latest-update>.

AND you get to see ALL of the pastors! It's like early Christmas!



Help Missions 'Stuff the Van' for Interfaith Community Services

On behalf of the St. Mark's staff, Missions Committee and Interfaith Community Services, thank you so much for your generous support of our ongoing Food Bank Challenge. We are very grateful. Our remarkable congregation has responded in a big way. **We have now donated more than 11,000 pounds of food to the ICS Food Bank!** Those donations have provided thousands of meals to families in our community.

Our work is never completed in helping to feed those suffering from food insecurity. The need has never been greater. We plan to continue our collections from 10-11 a.m. Tuesdays and Saturdays in the north parking lot.

Our biggest food collection day of the year is only a few days away. **As part of the Advent Caravan this Sunday, Nov. 22, we will have a van from ICS and we hope to "Stuff the Van" full with your donations that day.** In addition to our regular non-perishable items, we are requesting special consideration for boxed potatoes and stuffing for the holidays. Bring whatever you can and join in the celebration. No donation is too big or too small. It all helps! We are doing great work in our community. Thanks for your continuing support.
John Yost, ICS Liaison

Nash Neighbors Collecting \$25 to Spread Christmas Joy

By the time you read this, our annual Nash Neighbors project of collecting \$25 gift cards from Target and Walmart will just about be finished. **Thursday, Nov. 19 is the last opportunity to drop off cash or cards at our drive-through between 10 and 11 a.m. in the north parking lot.** However, if you hurry, you can still mail a check to the church or use the online giving option on the church's website: <https://umcstmarks.org/giving>. Be sure and identify either method for "Nash Gift Cards."

The COVID-19 virus has affected all of us, and we have learned to find different ways to support our church and the wonderful missions opportunities. That is why Nash Neighbors has listed several ways you can participate this year. Our generous congregation donated almost \$5,000 last year, which provided Christmas gifts for many Nash families. We are challenged to meet that goal again, despite the challenges of COVID-19.

Thank you for supporting the children of Nash Elementary School.

Sue Pierce, Nash Neighbors Liaison

Log On for St. Mark's Musical Christmas Celebration

Be sure to join us for "St. Mark's Musical Christmas Celebration" at 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 20. This virtual experience will feature a collection of many of our own musicians, from whom we have not heard for several months.

One of the many unfortunate circumstances of this pandemic is that our musicians, who regularly bless us with their musical talents, have been limited in the way they've been able to participate. Many of them have agreed to contribute a seasonal piece of music to help produce "St. Mark's Musical Christmas Celebration."

Throughout the program, our pastors will join to share pieces of Scripture, observations or short prayers. This virtual program will be available on the same three platforms where we share our worship experiences – the church's website (<https://umcstmarks.org/>), Facebook St. Mark's Tucson and You Tube UMC St. Mark's Oro Valley. So, mark your calendar now for 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 20.

Be Part of St. Mark's Musical Christmas Celebration!



To conclude our virtual musical celebration, members of St. Mark's congregation are invited to submit a short video of themselves sharing Christmas greetings. Please take a moment to record a short sentence or two sharing your wishes. Be sure to include a final line to identify yourselves (ie: from The Smiths). This will be a wonderful opportunity to see our treasured friends at this miraculous time of year. Submit your recording to info@umcstmarks.org no later than Dec. 4. We look forward to seeing each and every one during this special season.

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Relax, Listen to Harpist in St. Mark's Meditation Gardens

Take time out of a usually hectic and bustling time of year to visit the St. Mark's Meditation Gardens. Harpist

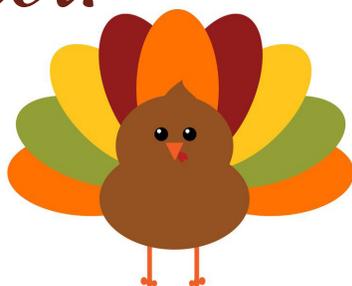


Kathy Narney will bless us with seasonal selections from 3-5 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13. Although we usually need to slow down to reflect upon the true miracle of this season, this unusual year brings different issues with it. Chances are that people may be feeling lonesome and/or depressed.

Take time on the 13th to simply enjoy, to mediate, to reflect, to reprioritize, if needed. It will, indeed, be time well spent. For everyone's safety, we ask that all participants wear masks and respect social distance.

Reminder!

Church staff will be off Thursday, Nov. 26 and Friday, Nov. 27 in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday.



Annual UMW Craft Sale Moves Online to Craigslist

Are you looking for a special Christmas gift? Something one of a kind?

St. Mark's United Methodist Women Craft Circle welcomes you to participate in our virtual craft sale. The monies raised in this endeavor go to support missions in Tucson and around the world. Just go to Craigslist Tucson (<https://tucson.craigslist.org>) and enter "HOMEMADE..." (all caps followed by 3 dots) in the search box on the left. Our craft items will be easy to find because the first word of our posts is "HOMEMADE...". If you find something you would like to purchase, reply to the post on Craigslist, and encrypted emails will be our mode of communication to make arrangements for delivery of your purchase.



We post new items often, so be sure to check Craigslist regularly. You can select from crocheted or quilted items, wooden holiday boxes, crosses, wreaths, microwave cozies, walker pouches, tree skirts, Christmas stockings, aprons and more holiday items. We have items for pets as well. Contact Bonnie Sargent at (see directory) if you have any questions. We appreciate your prayers and support.

Joy to the World Sing-along!

Starring: YOU!

Want to be part of an all-church virtual sing-along? We are putting together videos of church members singing "Joy to the World" for Christmas Eve. As you can imagine, collecting and mixing the videos and audio takes some time, so we need YOU to get in the Christmas spirit a little early!



→ How does this work?

Members of the congregation individually record themselves singing along to all 4 verses of Joy to the World using the audio music provided in the links at the end of this article. Send the recording to info@umcstmarks.org.

→ What do I need?

To participate at home you will need earphones/earbuds plugged into your smartphone/tablet/computer to hear the music. Record yourself singing the song on your smartphone/tablet in a video format. Send the video to the email address. The video you send will only have you and your voice recorded. (This is perfect!)

→ What if I don't have that equipment at home but I still want to participate?

Cathy Harris will be at church from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, and you may come record yourself using her iPad. Slots are every 15 minutes, with 15 minutes between for sanitizing. If slots fill up, we will add more. To sign up, use this link: <https://tinyurl.com/stmarksjoy>

→ What if I want to sing alto, tenor or bass?

That is great! Use the recording with Cathy's voice singing the soprano to help you hear the melody line.

→ What if I'm nervous about getting the right notes?

No problem! Use the recording with Cathy's voice singing the song and feel confident that it will sound fantastic!

Please send all recordings by Dec. 1. Recordings received after Dec. 1 may not make it into the final production.

Questions or problems with the resources? Please email Cathy Harris at ([see directory](#)).

Resources:

Joy to the World piano only recording - <https://tinyurl.com/y626szyr>

Joy to the World Cathy and piano recording - <https://tinyurl.com/y4l7xyym>

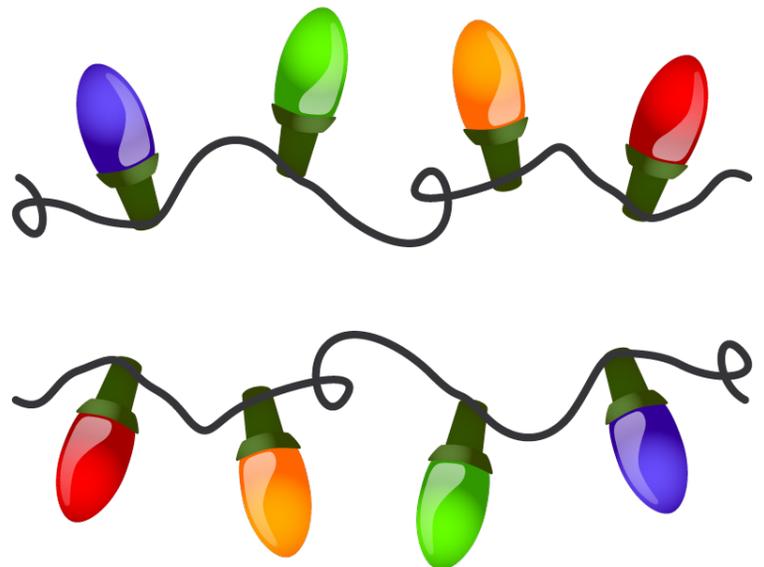
Joy to the World Hymnal - <https://hymnary.org/hymn/UMH/246>

General Guidelines for Recording - <https://tinyurl.com/y6fz694u>

Join United Methodist Women for (Virtual) Christmas Tea



St. Mark's United Methodist Women will meet at 10 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 8 via Zoom for a virtual Christmas Tea Party. Members will receive a Zoom link to the meeting. We will have the annual installation of new officers, a short spiritual growth lesson and a Christmas Carol sing-along. If you are not a member and would like to join us, please contact Kay Hayworth ([see directory](#)).



Time to Order Christmas Poinsettias!



Celebrating a St. Mark's tradition, the Sanctuary will be decorated with red and white poinsettias during Christmas. Contributions toward the Christmas poinsettias can be made in honor or memory of someone by completing the form below and mailing it with your check to the church office by Dec. 14. The flower form can also be filled out electronically and your donation made under "Holiday Flowers" at <https://umcstmarks.org/giving>. The form and check can also be dropped off at the office after calling to confirm office hours. (mailing address: St. Mark's UMC, 1431 W. Magee Rd., Tucson, AZ 85704 or website: www.umcstmarks.org)

The suggested donation of \$15 will help purchase the poinsettias; any money over and above the cost of the flowers will go into the Worship Committee's Flower Fund. Traditionally, WC has used the Flower Fund to purchase actual items for various Tucson charities to help serve their constituents; we try not to duplicate the Missions

Committee's disbursements. In the past the Flower Fund purchased a washer and dryer for The Inn shelter housed at First United Methodist Church.

On Sunday, Dec. 20, the poinsettia commemorative list will accompany the online bulletin; copies of the bulletin and list will be available by mail to the flower donors (see form). After Christmas the poinsettias can be picked up at the office before noon on Jan. 4 and 5. After these dates the remaining flowers will be distributed to the homebound.

Please PRINT clearly.

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____ Address: _____

I am contributing \$_____ toward the purchase of poinsettias for the sanctuary.

In honor of: _____

In memory of: _____

Please circle whether you would like a mailed copy of the commemorative list: YES or NO



November prayer requests

St. Mark's Prayer Ministry Team provides information so you can pray for people and activities happening in and around church during the month. NOTE: The monthly Prayer Requests are located on the church website under the MINISTRIES tab, then CONGREGATIONAL CARE. Or if you are reading this online, follow this link:

https://umcstmarks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/monthlyprayerlist_web11.20.pdf

✝ Give thanks for Matt Ashley, UMC South District superintendent, who presided, and to our pastors and staff, St. Mark's church leaders, and members of the congregation who participated in, and/or attended the Annual Church Conference on Monday, Nov. 9.

✝ Pray God's blessings for St. Mark's in-person outdoor worship services at 9 a.m. Sunday mornings, beginning Nov. 8. Ask God's presence and love to be with the pastors and staff and all those facilitating and attending these services. NOTE: These services are small group size. You need to register online each week to participate.

✝ Pray for our continued effort to provide prerecorded Sunday worship services, too, as many in the congregation, and other visitors and friends, participate in online worship each week.

✝ Pray for good participation in the Advent Caravan (parking lot drive-through event) from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 22.

✝ Give thanks for the congregation's ongoing support of the Interfaith Community Services food drive. Pray for an extra effort to "Stuff the ICS Van" with non-perishable food items during the Advent Caravan.

✝ Pray God's blessings of our 2021 Stewardship Campaign, Anchored in Hope. Pray that many people will report their intended financial support via a Commitment Card mailed to the church office or returned to church until 2 p.m. during the Advent Caravan.

✝ Pray for good participation as the St. Mark's congregation provides \$25 Walmart and Target gift cards for specific Nash Elementary School families identified by the school, to be helped at Christmas.

✝ Pray for God's blessings for Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network (TIHAN) Poz Café (Thanksgiving dinner), and St. Mark's partial sponsorship of it, on Thursday, Nov. 19. Give thanks for Walmart, Target or Fry's gift cards, dish detergent, toilet paper, and facial tissue that we are donating, too. NOTE: Collection of these items will be in the north parking lot on Tuesday and Saturday mornings.

✝ Give thanks for God's blessings, presence and love for each of us, as we celebrate Thanksgiving safely with family and friends, or as we are alone.

✝ Pray for St. Mark's Advent season that begins Sunday, Nov. 29. Ask God's blessings for this year's Advent theme, "Our Deepest Gifts" – Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. May each of us prepare our hearts and minds to receive God's Christmas blessings.

✝ Pray for good participation in the adult Advent Study, "Incarnation" (book) by Adam Hamilton. May everyone who wants to be part of a Zoom study session find and register for a convenient class day/time. May these online opportunities help us connect and share with other people in the congregation as we prepare for Christmas.

✝ Pray for Pastors Sharon, Stuart, Evy and Kim as they continue to provide ministry, leadership and care for our congregation as more aspects of the COVID-19 shutdown are lifted. Pray for their good health, safety and well-being in all situations. May they feel God's presence and know His love for them each day.

✝ Pray for God's wisdom and guidance for good decisions and leadership of our government leaders, health professionals, scientists and others as COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines change. Pray as businesses, schools, universities and events open up, and travel, shopping and gatherings begin again – that we will all stay healthy and be safe.



St. Mark's UMC
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Email:
info@umcstmarks.org
Website:
www.umcstmarks.org

Lead Pastor:
Rev. Sharon Ragland
Associate Pastors:
Rev. Stuart Salvatierra
Rev. Dr. Evy McDonald

Sunday Worship
Livestreamed
9:45 a.m.
umcstmarks.org
Facebook
YouTube

Address Service Requested

Reflections
Advent

“Come thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free”

That’s the first line of an Advent hymn that deeply touches my heart. This is a special edition of the “Messenger,” intended to let you know about St. Mark’s plans and programs for the season of Advent.

This year Advent begins on Sunday, Nov. 29 and ends on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, and is the season of preparing for the coming of Christ into our hearts and lives at Christmas. The word “Advent” is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming,” which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*. Advent carries with it a sense of expectation that if our hearts are ready, Christ will come.

So, back to the hymn, “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus.” Right now I’m humming the tune to the hymn in my heart and letting the words wash over me. I think I’m beginning to enter into Advent! During this difficult and challenging year, I need the freeing of my spirit by Christ more than ever. I can’t remember a more challenging time in my 30 years of ministry, and relying on the hope of Christ’s coming is very comforting and inspiring to me in these times. I hope that is true for you, too, in the season of

Advent 2020.

At St. Mark’s, we’re anticipating Advent with our Advent Caravan on Nov. 22. I hope you will drive through our parking lot for that. Then worship, classes and other special events will help us prepare for Christ’s coming.

My prayers go out to those in our congregation and community who are struggling with illness, loss, grief and isolation. In my heartfelt prayers I surround you with Christ’s light and love. Our family welcomes your prayers as our daughter, Julie, undergoes chemotherapy for breast cancer. Late in 2019 she had a lumpectomy for a very early stage breast cancer. On a routine one-year MRI, cancer was discovered again, so she is in treatment and will have surgery in a few months, followed by more chemotherapy. She is doing well and has an excellent prognosis. Please hold her and her family (husband, Chris, and son, Isaiah) and all of us who love her in your prayers. Please pray also for all those who are sick with COVID-19 and those who care for them. Each of us is affected in many ways by the pandemic, so be kind to yourself and others and let the hope, peace, joy and love of Christ come over your heart.

Blessings, Sharon