

Trinity United Church of Christ
An Open and Affirming Congregation

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December 24, 2023

7:30 PM

 **CHRISTMAS EVE HANDBELL RECITAL** 

“Lo, How A Rose ‘er Blooming”

Sandra Eithun

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“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent”

Judith E. Treisback

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“Joyful and Triumphant”

Douglas E. Wagner

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CHRISTMAS GREETING

PRELUDE

“Fantasy on “Greensleeves”

Music by Brian Henkelman

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Flourish on *“Adeste Fidelis”*

Music by Tom Mitchell

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***CALL TO WORSHIP¹**

L: On this holiest of nights,

P: we come, joining the shepherds who are stunned by wonder.

L: On this most silent night,

P: we come, our hopes and dreams joining those of Mary and Joseph.

L: On this night of carols and candlelight,

P: we come, our glad songs joining with the choirs of angels over us.

L: We gather together to hear once more, a story so ancient and yet so current, so distant and yet so near.

P: We come to hear the story of God coming to us.

L: This story is for us.

P: This love is for us.

L: Family of faith, welcome here- welcome home.

P: Amen.

***OPENING CAROL**

O Come, All Ye Faithful

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O Come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold Him, born the King of Angels!
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!
O sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation!
Sing all ye citizens of heaven above!
Now to our God be Glory in the highest!
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!
Amen, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning,
O Jesus, forever be Thy Name adored;
Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing!
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Barry & Sarie Dickey; Nora & Eve Dickey; Sam, Liam & Grace Neff

Leader 1: Please be seated. We come to adore the Christ child. On bended knee, with hopeful hearts, and eyes stretched wide with wonder and awe. We turn our faces toward Christ and receive the gift of his mercy and the beauty of his light.

Leader 2: On this Christmas Eve, we tremble at the wonder we remember together: God entered our world in the body of a poor child, born on a dark night in a chilly stable, with only a manger for his bed.

ALL: God entered the world and took on human form to show us how to live in hope, peace, joy, and love.

Leader 3: When we light the Christ candle, we remember the star above the stable. We celebrate the light coming into the darkness. We celebrate the Christ child.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest! We give thanks for the Light of the World, born this night!

CAROL

Hark, the Herald Angels Sing (v. 1)

Hark, the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark, the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

***TIME OF CONFESSION**

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION²

ALL: God of Joy, we come to celebrate again the arrival of Love Incarnate here in our very midst. Your glorious arrival is enough to cause the forests to sing for joy, yet we still find reasons to complain and sigh. Your light of salvation is bright enough to illuminate every corner of our lives, yet we still find ourselves shrouded in worry and doubt. Your gift of Love is big enough for the whole world, yet we still find ourselves resentful that your love extends to those whom we deem to be unworthy. God, you invite us into the light of the stable where the overlooked and forgotten have gathered to celebrate the miracle of your love. Give us the strength and courage to join you at the manger. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

ACT OF PRAISE *Angels We Have Heard on High (v. 1, 3)*

Angels we have heard on high, Singing sweetly through the night,
And the mountains in reply echoing their brave delight,
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Come to Bethlehem and see, Him whose birth the angels sing:
Come, adore on bended knee Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

A TIME FOR ALL AGES

CHOIR ANTHEM

“Arise”

Words by Mary and Stephen Martin
Music by Joseph Martin
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READING OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Luke 2:1-20

CAROL

O Little Town of Bethlehem (v. 1)

**O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie:
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by:
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the Everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

CAROL

O Little Town of Bethlehem (v. 4)

**O Holy Child of Bethlehem! Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today;
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel!**

CHRISTMAS PRAYER

CHOIR ANTHEM

"What Sweeter Music"

John Rutter
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TIME FOR DISCIPLESHIP & GENEROSITY

CALL TO OFFERTORY

OFFERTORY

"O Little Town of Bethlehem/ Cradle Song"

Arr. by Jack Schrader/Judy Nishimura
Flute Stylings/Christmas Jubilation
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***OFFERTORY RESPONSE**

"In the Bleak Midwinter"

vs. 4
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**What can I offer, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wise one I would do my part;
But what can I offer: all my heart.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

CHOIR ANTHEM

“O Holy Night”

Adolfe Adam
Arr. by Rebecca Belliston
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SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

INVITATION³

L: May the God of silent nights be with you!

P: May the God of herald angels be with you!

L: Open your hearts to the One born in the little town of Bethlehem.

P: May Emmanuel come to abide in our hearts.

L: Join all believers in singing of our joy this night.

P: May our voices blend with those of the angels and shepherds.

COMMUNION PRAYER

On this evening when we celebrate his birth, in the days to come when we follow him to Jerusalem, we sing carols of that mystery we call faith:

ALL: Christ was born, so we might have life; Christ died, so we might have forgiveness; Christ was raised, so we might have resurrection; Christ will be born again, to gather us together with him.

REMEMBERING THE STORY

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION & THE LORD’S PRAYER(sins/sin against)

All: Our Father, (Creator, Mother, Friend), 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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

BREAKING AND POURING OF THE WINE

SHARING OF THE ELEMENTS

(The outer circle is grape juice; the inner circle is wine)

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

**It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
“Peace on the earth, goodwill to all, from heaven’s all gracious King!”
The word in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.**

O Little Town of Bethlehem

**How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven;
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in.**

What Child is This

**What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary’s lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this, the angels sing, is Christ, God’s holy offering;
Haste, haste your praise to bring, the babe, the child of Mary!**

The First Nowell

**The first Nowell the angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,
In fields as they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter’s night that was so deep.
Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell,
Born is the King of Israel!**

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

L: Loving God, we thank you for the gift of this time at the table with you. As we go into the world, help us to be the gift another needs,

P: sharing your blessings of love and grace, running to tell the Story we heard from the shepherds.

L: Help us to be the comfort which can swaddle others,

P: sharing Jesus' compassion with the poor and needy, welcoming the holiness offered by the most vulnerable we meet.

L: Help us to enkindle the lives around us,

P: sharing your peace with all the broken, learning your language of hope. Amen.

PASSING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST



CANDLE LIGHTING SERVICE

The ushers will bring the light into the congregation.

*As you receive the light from your neighbor,
please tip the unlit candle into the flame.*

The congregation will sing the following carols during the candle lighting.

Please follow the words on the screens.

Silent Night

**Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright;
'Round yon virgin mother and Child, Holy Infant so tender and mild;
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night! Holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!**

**Silent night! Holy night! Son of God, love's pure light;
Radiant beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.**

**Silent night! Holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light;
With the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!**

CHRISTMAS BLESSING

***CAROL**

Joy to the World

Joy to the world! The Lord is come:
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns:
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove;
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love, And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.

***POSTLUDE**

“Joy to the World”

Music by Mary McDonald

Go out with Joy!

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The Christmas Poinsettias are given in...

- ♥ Memory of Mr.& Mrs. John S. Gehr, John Gehr, Don Sarakon by Elsie Sarakon
- ♥ Memory of Robert & Margaret Stefanko (my mom & dad) by Carol Ann Day
- ♥ Memory of our Parents & Grandparents by Engman Family
- ♥ Honor of Loved Ones by Susanna & Chris Goheen
- ♥ Memory of our Parents & Grandparents by Bill & Sharon Rinker
- ♥ Memory of Shawn P. Vores by Mom and brothers Chris and Andy
- ♥ Memory of Jerry Alan Birt, Jr. by Jerry & Jane Birt
- ♥ Memory of Arthur & Jean McArthur, Joyce McArthur by Judy, Matt & Linda
- ♥ Memory of Long & Crouse family members that are with God! by Russell Long
- ♥ Honor of our family, friends, and the spirit of the season by Molly and Ben Adams
- ♥ Honor of Dani Neff, Gill Hollen, Carol Ann Day, Pat Fogle by Greg & Diana Lyon-Loftus
- ♥ Memory Phyllis King by Ralph King and Family
- ♥ Honor of Mowen Family by Brian Mowen
- ♥ Memory of Mellott Family by Brian Mowen
- ♥ Honor of Arthur Warnick by Carol Warnick
- ♥ Honor of our children and grandchildren by Carol & Nick Mowen
- ♥ Memory of our Parents and Grandparents by Carol & Nick Mowen
- ♥ Honor of our church family by Pastor Dani & Team Neff
- ♥ Honor of our Grammy & Grampy by the Nefflets
- ♥ Memory of Rev. Jim Williams by Pastor Dani
- ♥ Memory of Michael Menard and Lindsey Hoover by John & Susie Menard



Please take your poinsettia home after the Christmas Eve service or deliver them to a homebound member. If you will not be at the Christmas Eve service in person, please let us know, and we will make arrangements for you to pick them up.

References

¹ The Call to Worship was based, in part, on liturgy written by Bryan Schneider-Thomas and posted at <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/4458/worship-elements-christmas-eve-option-1> and accessed on November 30, 2023.

² The Prayer of Confession was written by Nancy C. Townley and published on the website *Ministry Matters*, <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/3411/worship-connection-christmas-eve-option-2> and accessed on December 7, 2021.

³ The bulk of the communion liturgy is adapted from liturgy written by Rev. Thom Shuman, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/2016/12/liturgy-wcommunion-for-christmas-day-a.html>

CHURCH STAFF

Rev. Danielle Neff, Pastor
Caleb Murray, Director of Faith Formation & Programming
Carol Ann Day, Organist
Gillian Austin, Director of Music
Kristen Adams, Communications Coordinator
John Mentzer, Custodian
Kim Lark, Secretary

WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS

Media Team: Karen Adams, Hal Bitner, Mark Hollen,
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Bill and Sharon Rinker
Children's Sermon: Pastor Dani
Lay Reader: Kristen Adams
Acolyte: Cayden Leissler

Thank you to Sean Kline & Carol Mowen for sharing the gift of music with us by playing the flute.

OUR MISSION

Because of our love of God, who first loved us, we empower disciples to let their lights shine through love of neighbor, love of children, and love of creation.

OUR VISION

As Jesus modeled first for us, we are working to create a just world where all are welcomed, all are loved, and all are included.

OUR PURPOSE

Celebrating the Christ in all of us by joyfully serving our community.

