

Christ Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

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The Rev. Candace Thomas, Designated-Term Minister

Jay Harragin, Director of Music

Daniel D. Best, Liturgist

Our Vision: *A church that listens, praises God, inspires, and serves others.*

December 24, 2020, 4 p.m.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Preparation for Worship: “This is the message of Christmas: We are never alone.”

Taylor Caldwell

“Christmas, my child, is love in action.”

Dale Evans



*Please stand, if it is comfortable for you to do so, where the * indicates.*

PRELUDE

“Happy Birthday, Jesus” Graham Bryan and Jay Harrigan”

WELCOME – Pastor Candy

***Hymn: “O Come, All Ye Faithful” (No. 135, NCH)**

**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**

***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

One: Because God so loves the world,

Many: This beautiful and broken world,

One: This divided and distanced and world,

Many: This warming and burning world,

One: This lost and hurting world,

Many: God’s love is made flesh.

One: For such a time as this,

Many: A child is born unto us.

One: For such a time as this,

Many: The light of Christ shines upon us.

One: In a smelly stable turned birthing room,

Many: New visions of family and community are born.

One: By the surprising subversion of God's in-breaking love,

Many: The burden of injustice is thrown off.

One: Through the ages-old song of angels and shepherds,

Many: God's glory is proclaimed.

One: On this holy night, the one we've been watching for is here.

Many: On this holy night, the time we've been waiting for is now.

One: Let us rejoice together!

Many: Glory to God in the highest, and peace and goodwill to all!

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

ALL: FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS, THE CHRIST CHILD COMES TO US. FOR SUCH AS TIME AS THIS, GOD'S LOVE IS BORN IN US. JOY TO THE WORLD!

(Baby Jesus is placed in the manger.)

Special Music: "Gesù Bambino" by Pietro A. Yon
Debbie Wanninkhof, violinist

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Isaiah 9:2-7 (NRSV)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Music: "Your Star Is Shining" Andy Godley

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (UNISON)

We admit it, O God: That in a time such as this, it can be harder than usual to open our hearts to the wonder of your love. In a time such as this, it can be harder to feel the joy. Thank you for reminding us that Christ comes for such a time as this. Thank you for understanding that in such a time as this, we need you all the more. Thank you for promise of the Christ Child, come to us again. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE- Pastor

Nothing can separate us from the love of God, nothing! Thanks be that in the love gift of the Christ Child our sins are forgiven.

CHRISTMAS EVE PRAYER

THE PRAYER OF JESUS (*all together*) *We join our hearts together as we pray:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Pastor: The sacred story tells us it was on this night that God's greatest gift was given. But the story does not end there: It goes on to show us how to respond to that wondrous gift with offerings of our own. Now, we probably don't have any frankincense in our pockets. Chances are we have no myrrh in our purses. We may not possess even a glimmer of gold. What we do have is the greatest resource of all: God's love in our hearts. By that love, let us care and give like never before. By that caring and with great joy, let us give to the United Church of Christ's Christmas Fund, so that the church's retired clergy and lay staff might know the miracle of God's love through our generosity

MUSICAL OFFERING: "Go Where I Send Thee"

Graham Bryan and Andy Godley

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (responsive)

One: Good Christian friends, rejoice!

Many: All God's beloveds, rejoice!

One: All creation groaning, rejoice!

Many: Retired clergy, church staff, and spouses, rejoice!

One: Good Christian friends, rejoice!

Many: All God's beloveds, rejoice!

One: Heaven and earth, rejoice!

**All: Jesus, our savior, is born today! Christ, our Lord, was born for this!
Love, our light, shines brightly through our gifts! May our offerings, by
God's blessing, become hope renewed and life restored. Amen.**

*HYMN: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (NCH, No.133)

**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**

**For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And Peace to men on earth**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

When they saw this, they made known what had been told 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. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

HYMN: "Away in a Manger"

(NCH) No. 124

**Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.**

**The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay.**

**The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.**

**I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle 'til morning is nigh.**

**Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.**

**Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And take us to heaven, to live with Thee there.**

Message: "This Will Be A Sign" by John Sumwalt

CANDLE LIGHTING SERVICE

(You are invited to come forward and light your candle from the Christ Candle. Let an usher know if you need assistance. Please be careful with your candle. Hold the candle straight to avoid dripping hot wax. You are welcome to take your candle home with you as a reminder of this Christmas Eve.)

*CAROL: "Silent Night, Holy 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!

* A CHRISTMAS BLESSING

*THE POSTLUDE



Thank you to all who have helped us celebrate Christmas and the birth of the Christ Child by sharing their talents, gifts, and creativity in worship tonight. To our musicians Jay Harrigan, Graham Bryan, Andy Godley, and Debbie Wanninkhof, kudos! Thank you to Lorrie LeGrand for donating our beautiful Christmas tree and lights! Thank you to Joan Campagna for the ornaments, the evergreen, and the nativity set. Thanks to Cindy and Jim Ketzle for the poinsettias around the altar. The beautiful urns filled with poinsettias come from memorial gifts given in loving memory of Gloria Fuller, as did the bench at the rear of the Garden Chapel. “Thank you to Lorrie LeGrand who is our videographer par excellence tonight!”

THE CHRISTMAS FUND offering will be received tonight. It helps the United Church of Christ Pension Board to provide compassionate and concrete responses to those pastors and church professionals who have served us in the church so faithfully and are experiencing financial difficulty. Please use the enclosed envelope and share some of your blessings with them. Through your gifts you can help ensure that “The Light is Surely Coming” and pass on God’s love. Thank You! Your generosity and caring make a real difference!

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US IN WORSHIP AT 10:30 a.m. each Sunday in person in our Garden Chapel or on our Facebook page.

Merry Christmas! Welcome to Everyone!

*We pray that the Child of Bethlehem will find a welcome in your heart and in your life, and that you may know the wonder of being loved unconditionally. At Christ Congregational Church we strive to love one another as God has loved us and welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us. Therefore, we are an **Open and Affirming** church, loving and welcoming all people in all of God’s variety; including racial, ethnic, and economic diversity, gender diversity and expression, sexual orientation, and physical and mental abilities. No matter who you are, no matter where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here!*



Safety Protocols For Outside Services at Christ Congregational UCC

In-person worship services will resume in the Garden Chapel on 11/8/2020 at 10:30 a.m..It is expected that people will attend only if they are well. A photo will be taken of those in attendance in the event that contact tracing is needed. Ushers will obtain contact information from any guest visitors.

Live streaming on Facebook will continue. Worshippers may choose the option with which they are most comfortable.

All attendees and participants are required to wear masks at all times which cover both mouth and nose.

Social distancing must be observed at all times—prior, during, and following the worship service. As much as you would like to extend a welcoming handshake or warm hug, **please don't** out of respect and love for the health of our community.

An Usher will be stationed at each of the three entrances to the Garden Chapel to assist in seating the congregation.

Hand sanitizers will be available at each entrance.

Seating can be on the rock pews or chairs may be brought by congregants if desired. If cushions are needed for the rock pews they must be brought in as they cannot be provided. If assistance is needed to ushers are onhand.

Worship programs will continue to be online each Friday and will also be handed out by Ushers wearing gloves.

The Kelsey building will remain locked. There will be no refreshments after worship. Water fountains will not be available. Only bathrooms in the linear classroom building will be available.

A receptacle will be available for offerings.

Monthly Holy Communion will be observed using individual Celebration pre-packaged elements.

Trash cans with bag liners will be placed at all exits. Live Streaming on Facebook will be continued. **In case of bad weather, worship will be held in the Sanctuary with doors and glass side walls open.**