

Christ Congregational United Church of Christ
A church that listens, praises God, inspires, and serves others.

14920 Southwest 67th Avenue, Palmetto Bay, Florida 33158

www.christcongregationalucc.org

christch@bellsouth.net

305-235-9381

The Rev. Candace Thomas, Designated-Term Pastor
Jay Harragin, Director of Music
Joan Chandler, Liturgist

December 24th, 2021 – 6 p.m.
CHRISTMAS EVE

Preparation for Worship

**“Christmas can’t be bought from a store.
Maybe Christmas means a little bit more.”**

– Dr. Seuss



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

PRELUDE “I Saw Three Ships”

WELCOME — Pastor Candy

***HYMN: “O Come, All Ye Faithful” (No. 193, HFG)**

[Refrain]

O come let us adore Him,

O come let us adore Him,

O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

1/ 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; *[Refrain]*

2/ Sing choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

O sing all ye citizens of Heaven above;

Glory to God, all glory in the highest; *[Refrain]*

3/ Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;

O Jesus to Thee be all glory be given;

Word of the Father now in flesh appearing; *[Refrain]*

***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: We thank you, God, for your gift of Jesus Christ to the entire world. We thank you that Christ's coming makes hope, peace, love, and joy possible for every person in every nation. Encourage us to do our part to bring goodwill and peace to our families, our churches, our neighborhoods, and the world. Now let your Spirit put us in touch with you, the living God, through the words and music we hear tonight. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Congregational Response — Tune: "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"

Lyrics by Rev. Elana Keppel Levy, 2021

**Candles glowing, promise showing Jesus born a baby small.
Hosts rejoicing, shepherds voicing – praising Christ the Lord of all.
God is with us, shout hosanna, raise a chorus, singing ever:
Praising Christ the Lord of all! Praising Christ the Lord of all!**

PLACING BABY JESUS IN THE MANGER

SPECIAL MUSIC: "What Child Is This?"

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

The Righteous Reign of the Coming King

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.

SPECIAL MUSIC Ding! Dong! Merrily on High

CHRISTMAS LITANY

Leader: Every life in its particularity is precious to God,
who came to us in a particular body, in a particular time.

People: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

L: Black lives, queer lives, Indigenous lives – these are precious to God.

P: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

L: Trans lives, Palestinian lives, neurodivergent lives – these are precious to God.

P: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

L: Undocumented lives, disabled lives, migrant lives – these are precious to God.

P: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

L: All who face oppression, discrimination, war, and tumult are precious.

P: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

L: All who are burdened by mental unhealth
and/or by the stigma attached to it are precious.

P: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

L: All who find themselves outside of the inns of our society,
lonely and outcast are precious.

P: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

L: All those who, like the shepherds, labor
and especially those who labor during this day of celebration are precious.

P: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

L: Salvation is here! Taste and see!

All: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

CHRISTMAS EVE PRAYER

THE PRAYER OF JESUS (Unison) *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.

OFFERING INVITATION

Tis the season to give! Though we may not bring gold, frankincense, or myrrh, we offer our own variety of gifts to put in action alongside God's activity in the world. We are blessed to have ministries like the UCC Christmas Fud, which makes an immediate difference in the lives of those who serve the church across the denomination. Through our giving, we can be messengers of the Good News, scattering hope, providing peace, rekindling joy, and expression love to all the people.

MUSICAL OFFERING: "The Little Drummer Boy"

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (Unison)

Thank you for the gifts we have the privilege of sharing this evening, dear God. May they represent your goodness in the lives of those reached by these gifts. Amen.

HYMN: "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

(No. 133, NCH)

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.

2/ For Christ is born of Mary,
and, gathered all above
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King
and peace to all the earth.

3/ How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in. (*continues*)

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 Immanuel!

THE BIRTH OF THE CHRIST CHILD Luke 2:1-20 (NSRV)

The Birth of Jesus

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.

The Shepherds and the Angels

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.”¹³ 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” (No. 124, NCH)

1/ Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

2/ The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

3/ Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and take us to heaven to live with you there.

MESSAGE: “This Will Be A Sign” by John Sumwait

MUSICAL INTERLUDE: “Your Star is Shining (A Shepherd’s Carol)”
by Andy Godley

CANDLE LIGHTING SERVICE

You are invited to follow Pastor Candy to the back doors where you will find light for your candles as you move outside to the Garden Chapel. Please be careful with your candles. Hold the candle straight to avoid dripping hot wax.

Tip only the unlit candle when receiving the light. After all of the candles are lit and we have all gathered in the Garden Chapel, we will sing “Silent Night” together. You are welcome to take your candle home with you as a reminder of this Christmas Eve.

***CAROL: "SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT"**

1/ 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.

2/ 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.

3/ Silent night, holy night,
Child of God, love's pure light,
Radiant beams from your holy face
bring the dawn of redeeming grace;
Jesus Christ at your birth,
Jesus Christ at your birth.

***A CHRISTMAS BLESSING**



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 United Church of Christ 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 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!

We are continuing to practice pandemic protocols here at CCC in worship. Face masks are required, social distancing is encouraged, doors are open for fresh air, and hand sanitizer is available at the back entrance. Your cooperation is appreciated!

WORSHIP ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26TH WILL BE HELD IN THE GARDEN CHAPEL AND WILL FEATURE A CHRISTMAS CAROL SING. YOU CAN CHOOSE TO SIT ON A ROCK (*BRING A CUSHION!*) OR ON A CHAIR. PLEASE COME JOIN US FOR A RELAXED TIME OF ENJOYING THE BEAUTY OF THE SEASON WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY!

THE CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING WILL BE RECEIVED THIS EVENING.

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years. Gifts may be made year-round at www.christmasfund.org. Thank you!

ONLINE GIVING - You may click on the "Give Online Today" button at the bottom of the e-newsletter or visit christcongregationalucc.org and click "online giving" to reach the secured Moon Clerk site.



JUDY & WALLY CARLSON	IN HONOR OF OUR LOVED ONES
MARY & FRANK TIRB	GOD, FAMILY, FRIENDS
JOAN CAMPAGNA	MOM, DAD, GRANDMOTHER
O SMITH	JACK SMITH
ANITA SMITH	MOTHER, DEAR ANNA LEE
LORRIE & JOSE	WITH LOVE FOR FAMILY
MIRIAM GRISSETT	MY PARENTS, JORGE & ELENA
JAY HARRAGIN	

In Appreciation

THANK YOU to all who have helped us celebrate Christmas and the birth of the Christ Child by sharing their talents and gifts in worship tonight. To our musicians Jay Harrigan, Graham Bryan, Andy Godley, and Anasofia Godley-Juarez, kudos! Thank you to Lorrie LeGrand for donating our beautiful Christmas tree and lights! Thanks to all who donated poinsettias. Thanks to Joy Reed for the lovely new nativity set. Thank you to Daniel Best, our videographer par excellence!