

CHRIST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
United Church of Christ



Christmas Eve
December 24th, 2021

*A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his
shoulders.*

ISAIAH 9:6

GATHERING MUSIC/PRELUDE (Begins at 5:30 PM, leads into prelude to start worship)

Fantasia on *Adeste fideles*

Cradle Song

Picardy

Gigue on *Go, tell it on the mountain*

Interlude on *Stille Nacht*

O Little Town of Bethlehem

In dulci jubilo: Four Faces of a Folksong

Announcement: Christ is Born

Shepherds, Haste!

Lullaby

Dance of Joy

David Blackwell (b. 1961)

Malcolm Archer (b. 1952)

Marilyn Biery (b. 1959)

Aaron David Miller (b. 1972)

Alan Bullard (b. 1947)

Marianne Kim (b. 1972)

Eleanor Whitsett (b. 1931)

HYMN

'Once In Royal David's City'

No. 165

Soloist: *Levi Swisher-Rosa*

CHRISTMAS WELCOME

Pastor Jeff

THRESHOLD MOMENT

Leader: All through the season of Advent as we prepared for Christmas, we've been exploring how we as a church can "make more room in the inn," becoming more hospitable to the needs of our community. On this Christmas Eve, we declare that the inn is open for the business of compassion with room enough for all! The long-awaited Messiah has been born and on him the light shines. We have only to open the doors of our lives and say, "welcome." Our Advent journey has led us to this moment when the light shining through the closed doors of life becomes an open door to new possibilities, new relationships, new life. What a poignant moment for us this year as the light - the light of hope, peace, joy, and love - multiplies from one illuminated heart and hand to another.

Sung Choir Response (Light & Bible enter Sanctuary):

Love comes to us at Christmas
Love comes to heal our souls.
Love brings an invitation
That our hearts might be made whole.
As we gather at the stable
In the darkness, glad and grateful
For the sacred in our midst,
For wonder and delight,
Christ is born in us this night.

Leader: Tonight we offer the Lights of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love to illumine the Door of Welcome. And we add the brightest light of all... the Light of the Newborn Jesus. It shines bright like the star that rose over Bethlehem. May this light also shine in our hearts, in our lives, and in our church. May this light awaken us to possibilities and lead us to greater hospitality. There *IS* room in *THIS* Inn, a *House for the Holy*.

Sung Choir Response (as the Christ Candle is lit):

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Love comes to heal our souls.
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Christ is born in us this night.

HYMN

'One Candle is Lit' (vs. 5)

No. 128

SHARING CHRIST'S PEACE

Leader: The Light of Christ be with you!

ALL: And also with you!

Leader: As we rise in body or spirit for our next hymn, I invite you to pass a "wave" of peace to the people around you (and to the people worshipping at home)!

A TIME FOR ALL AGES

HYMN

'Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones'

Robert J. Powell

SCRIPTURE *Isaiah 9:2-7 & Luke 2:1-7*

Isaiah 9:2-7 *(Common English Bible)*

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.

You have made the nation great;

you have increased its joy.

They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest,

as those who divide plunder rejoice.

As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke that burdened them,

the staff on their shoulders,

and the rod of their oppressor.



The Story Continues, and We're Invited to Join In

After Jesus was born, the visitors began to show up to his birthplace, spurred by the message of the angels. But what we know is that in the presence of Jesus there are no visitors, we are all family with a place reserved for each one of us. This table is God's table, it is not our table, and it is open to all who carry the divine spark of God - which means all people. There are no barriers to this table and it even extends beyond our worship space tonight into time and space to reach the tables of all our beloved siblings who are joining us from home tonight, and it extends throughout eternity to reach back to all the saints who have come before us and long into the future to include all of the saints who will come after. We are called to this table, invited, just as those visitors were invited so long ago - and so let us hear about those who gathered at the stable and join them in the presence of Jesus:

Luke 2:8-20: Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

COMMUNION PRAYERS OF PRAISE

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to God.

Leader: Now let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: How good it is to give thanks and praise!

Leader: We gather tonight at the Manger of Grace. And it is right, and a good and joyful thing, on this special night and always and everywhere, to give thanks to you, creator of heaven and earth. You, who breathed into us the same breath as the infant Jesus; You, who crafted our every fiber just as you did your own Son; You, who formed us in your own image - that same newborn image of the One Who Walked Among Us - thanks and praise be to you!

ALL: Your intention was for every created thing to have a place, to have vitality, to have sustenance in this world. Join us to your purpose, offering hospitality and healing to the suffering world. Forgive us for the things we have done, and that we have left undone, that have interfered with that purpose. Bring us into your embrace and join us to your body, the Church. Amen.

Leader: Friends, on this night especially, we are reminded that nothing can separate us from God's love - that God's love will find the most humble and simple ways to enter into our hearts and that we will be ever called to God's love. And so, with God's people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name, O God, and join their unending hymn,

ALL: Holy, holy, holy God of power and might adored, heaven and earth are shining bring, with the glory of your light. Loud hosannas now we sing! In the highest may they ring! Blessed is the coming One, Christ, Emmanuel, your Son. Glory in the highest! Holy God, your name be blessed!

REMEMBERING THE STORY

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. In the midst of a time of despair, oppression, division, and fear, your gestation in the house of a holy womb - through an unlikely midwife of salvific power - brought Jesus, the Christ, into this world.

Into The Inn of simple means came a life dedicated and anointed by the Spirit to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

A common birth for common people, he healed the sick, fed the hungry, and sat in houses at table with those who suffered, and those who perpetuated suffering, laying bare complicity and compassion.

His baptism, ministry, death, and resurrection gave the blueprints for the building of church community, and rejection of slavery to sin and death. You made a new covenant with us to be midwives, by water and the Spirit, birthing more hope, more peace, more joy, more love in this world, making more room in this house, at this table, for all.

When Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always, in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit. In another house, on another night - the night in which he gave himself up for us - he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples, and said: "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to the disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you, this is the cup of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of our faith.

ALL: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again!

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

THE PRAYER OF JESUS *(in unison)*

Our Creator (Father) who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kin-dom 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 Kin-dom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

BREAKING OF THE BREAD & POURING OF THE CUP

COMMUNION ANTHEM

'O Holy Night'

Adolphe Adam
arr. William Dressler

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

THANKSGIVING PRAYER *(in unison)*

We thank you, God, for breaking into our world - and for pouring into our lives and our experiences. We thank you, God, for this meal of thanksgiving - and for the stories of love, grace, and hope that it tells. Amen.

SHARING THE LIGHT

**We will move into a large circle around the edge of the sanctuary. Once we're in place, we will pass the light of the candles, starting with the pastors lighting their candles from the Christ Candle. We ask that everyone be careful with the candles, and we also offer battery operated candles for those who prefer it. As the light passes please tip the unlit candle to the candle that is lit in order to receive the light. The choir will sing Silent Night, Pastor Jeff will lead us in a benediction, and then we will extinguish our candles.*

CHOIR CAROL

'Silent Night'

No. 145

BENEDICTION

CLOSING HYMN

'Joy to the World'

No. 143

POSTLUDE

Toccatina on Joy to the World

Brenda Portman (b. 1980)



Participating in Today's Worship Service:

Rev. Jeffrey Kardisco, Senior Pastor

Rev. Ann-Marie Illsley, Associate Pastor

Murray Kidd, Music Director

Steven Young, Organist

Alisa Cassola, Soloist

David Wilcox, ASL Interpreter

¹McFee, Marcia. "Welcome to Worship Design Studio." *Worship Design Studio*, <https://worship-design-studio.mn.co/posts/series-the-inn-christmas-eve-the-inn>.

²Prewer, Bruce. "Christmas Benediction." *Christmas Benediction*, 28 Nov. 2011, <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/11/christmas-benediction.html>.