



"A Visit"—John August Swanson

CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
30 N. CLINTON ST.
IOWA CITY, IA 52245
319-337-4301

WORSHIP FOR DECEMBER 19, 2021
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

O God, we enter at this season by your grace into a joy we did not create, and into a mystery we cannot fathom. By your forgiveness our joy is made free. Grant us also that joy by which all grievances, all remembered misunderstandings, and all the blinding half-sights of other days are forgotten, that we may dwell together in peace and in gladness. Amen.

Samuel Miller

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

Erin and Izzy Brown

CALL TO WORSHIP

Raise your hearts and voices

Let us be glad

[Unison]

for great is God who comes to dwell among us.

HYMN 44 "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

**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 all on earth!**

**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.**

**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!**

OPENING PRAYER

**Creator of the stars of night and of the morning light,
we forget how the light comes out of the darkness and both are sacred to you.
Sometimes we feel our times and lives are full of peril and grief.
When we find ourselves waiting without hope and doubting our power to continue on
towards the dawn of new life, come to us and abide with us.
Open our eyes to see that you continually bring new light into our lives in unexpected ways
and in unexpected places.
Give us the courage to persevere in hope as so many before us have done in other perilous
times and places and let us be the bearers of encouragement towards those who will come
after us. Remind us that your hope continually greets us as the horizon towards which we
move. Amen.**

TIME OF GRATITUDE

ANTHEM “In the Bleak Midwinter” Andy Beck

TIME OF PRAYER

The “O Antiphons”

O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High,
pervading and permeating all creation, you order all things with strength and gentleness:

Come now and teach us the way to salvation.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Adonai, Ruler of the house of Israel,
you appeared in the burning bush to Moses and gave him the law on Sinai:

Come with outstretched arm to save us.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Root of Jesse, rising as a sign for all the peoples,
before you earthly rulers will keep silent, and nations give you honor:

Come quickly to deliver us.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Key of David, Scepter over the house of Israel,
you open and no one can close, you close and no one can open:

Come to set free the prisoners who live in darkness and the shadow of death.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, Sun of justice:

Come, shine on those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Ruler of the nations, Monarch for whom the people long, you are the Cornerstone
uniting all humanity:

Come, save us all, whom you formed out of clay.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Immanuel, our Sovereign and Lawgiver, desire of the nations and Savior of all:

Come and save us, O Lord our God.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer

The Prayer of Our Savior

Our Father, 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Choral Response

SCRIPTURE LESSON Micah 5:1-5

SCRIPTURE LESSON Luke 1:39-45

THE SONG OF MARY (Luke 1:46-55)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.

**From this day all generations will call me blessed:
you, the Almighty, have done great things for me
and holy is your name.**

You have mercy on those who fear you,
from generation to generation.

**You have shown strength with your arm,
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
casting down the mighty from their thrones**

and lifting up the lowly.

**You have filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.**

You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,
to remember the promise of mercy,

**the promise made to our forebears,
to Abraham and Sarah and their children for ever.**

SERMON “The World as It Might Be”

HYMN 31 “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

**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!"**

Refrain:

**Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"**

**Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time, behold Him come,
Offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased in flesh with us to dwell,
Jesus our Emmanuel.**

**Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that we no more may die.
Born to raise us from the earth,
Born to give us second birth.**

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

CHORAL RESPONSE

POSTLUDE

Minister:	The Rev. Bill Lovin
Director of Children's Programs:	The Rev. Ann Molsberry
Organist:	Bill Crouch
Choir Director	Chris Nakielski
Office Manager	Jenn Harden

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The Staff of Congregational UCC wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We thank you for your support over the past year.

WE'RE GLAD THAT YOU HAVE JOINED US FOR WORSHIP THIS MORNING. We are putting the safety of both the vaccinated and the unvaccinated in our congregation and the community first. Masks are required for all people in all parts of the building. We will keep social distance in the pews. There will be no coffee hour, although you are encouraged to talk with one another outside after worship.

WE ARE NOW LIVE STREAMING OUR WORSHIP SERVICES AT 10:15 ON SUNDAY MORNING. You can join us online in real time at <https://vimeo.com/event/1424751>. This streaming address will be the same each week.

RECORDINGS OF THE WORSHIP SERVICES are posted on Sunday afternoon at <https://vimeo.com/channels/1547852>. The recordings remain up permanently, so you can watch past worship services at your convenience or recommend them to a friend.

FLOWERS FOR WORSHIP SERVICES—If you would like to contribute flowers for the worship services on upcoming Sundays please call the office to let Jenn know or sign up on the sheet in Rockwood Hall.



Want to give online? Scan the QR code for our giving app.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICE

Candlelight and Carols Friday Evening, December 24, at 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Please join us for this worship service for people of all ages. This will include a special time for children, music by the choir, Christmas carols, a reading of the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke, and lighting of candles.

CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING: Each year, the United Church of Christ's Christmas Fund Offering allows the UCC to assist retired pastors living on limited incomes as well as to supplement small retirement annuities and health premiums and to provide emergency grants to active and retired clergy and lay employees. The mission of the Christmas Fund is to provide assistance dollars in situations of critical need, while preserving the dignity of those who receive the aid.

We will receive the Christmas Fund Offering during our worship on Christmas Eve. Please remember that your generous contributions can and do make a difference in the lives of many people.

THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED on Friday, December 24 and Monday, December 27 in celebration of Christmas and on Monday, January 3, in celebration of the New Year.

CELEBRATE EPIPHANY (the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles, the coming of the Magi) with us on Sunday, January 2, 2022. In our 10:15 worship service we will bring our observance of Christmas to a conclusion, hearing the story of the Magi from the Gospel of Matthew. On Sunday, January 9, we will celebrate the sacrament of communion during worship.

The Moravian Star was given to Congregational UCC by the Williamson family. They came to Iowa City from Wisconsin and their family ancestry was Moravian. The Moravian Church took shape during the late 14th century, before the Protestant reforms of Martin Luther and John Calvin, following the simple religious practices of Jan Hus. The Moravian Star originated in Germany in the 1830s as a craft project to teach geometry and was quickly adopted by the Moravian Church as a symbol of the birth of Jesus, hanging in churches from the first Sunday of Advent until Epiphany, January 6. Our star has the traditional 26 points, although some can have up to 100. Each year John Johnson makes sure that it hangs at the front of our sanctuary for the Christmas pageant and through the 12 days of Christmas.

ARTICLES FOR THE JANUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER should be sent to the church office by Monday, December 20. Thank you.

ALTERNATIVE GIVING UPDATE: We received \$2240 for Heifer cards and donations this year. Thanks to everyone who participated in this annual event. Your giving will make a big difference in the lives of people. Thanks to the Mission Board for coordinating the project. And thanks to Ginny Clemons for her calligraphy that makes the cards so special.

STEWARDSHIP IS HEART WORK: Pledge/estimate of giving cards for 2022 have been sent out. If you have not received one, please contact the church office. If you have received a card, please prayerfully fill it out and return it to the church as soon as possible. 2021 has been filled with many challenges and we have responded faithfully and with a generous compassion. We anticipate more challenges in 2022. Your deeply considered, prayerful support will help us to continue our Church's mission in downtown Iowa City and around the world. Thanks again for your generous giving.

GIVING UPDATES AVAILABLE: If you have any questions about your giving to the church or if you would like an update on your giving, please call the church office (337-4301) or email our Office Manager, Jenn Harden at uccicadmin@uccic.org.

CHURCH BOARD OPPORTUNITIES There are several opportunities to serve the church on one of our boards. There are openings on the Diaconate, Christian Education, Membership and Stewardship boards. Please contact Barb Sisley at (319) 430-2694 or sisleywebb@aol.com if you are interested in or want more information about any of these opportunities.

PLYMOUTH UCC IN DES MOINES INVITES PEOPLE FROM ACROSS THE STATE to join their six-session series *1619 Revisited* beginning on January 24. Participants can expect to read the 1619 Project essays published in The New York Times, listen to podcasts and musical performances, watch videos, learn from speakers, and engage in small-group discussions around medical inequality, the wealth gap, mass incarceration, education malpractice and undemocratic policies. Each session will offer advocacy ideas and action steps. All sessions are on Mondays and will be virtual on Zoom, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. The zoom link for the sessions will be sent in January. To register, please visit tiny.cc/1619-revisited For more information or if you have questions, please contact Sheena Thomas (sheenathomas96@gmail.com).