



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

WORSHIP FOR DECEMBER 24, 2023
CHRISTMAS EVE

When is the time for love to be born?
The inn is full on the planet earth,
And by a comet the sky is torn—
Yet Love still takes the risk of birth.
“The Risk of Birth, Christmas 1973”
Madeleine L’Engle

PRELUDE “In the Bleak Midwinter” Allen Orton Gibbs

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT

LIGHTING OF THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE
Chris and Amy Lewis, Ella, Lily, Oscar, and Malia

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Come all who long for God.
God is not far off.
God is near.

Come and see
In stable, star, and manger
The grace of God appears.

*CAROL 41 “O Come All Ye Faithful” (vs. 1 & 3)

*OPENING PRAYER

Great God, as you came at night when all was still, so enter our lives this night. You share our humanity and understand the disquiet of our souls. Abide with us. Lift the burdens of all your peoples, give peace to your world, bring light out of the darkness, and fill the earth with joy.

May hope and faith be found among us. Renew our sense of wonder. Give us courage in the face of all that troubles us. Help us to hear and to tell the news of your peace and good will among all people; in the name of Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Amen.

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#31)

Child, for us sinners, poor and in the manger,
we would embrace thee with love and awe;
who would not love thee, loving us so dearly?
O come let us adore him...

ANTHEM “The First Noel” Dan Forrest

A DECREE GOES OUT

Luke 2:1-5

CAROL 44 "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (vs. 1)

SHELTERING IN A STABLE

Luke 2:6-7

CAROL 29 "Go, Tell It on the Mountain" (vs. 3)

WATCHING IN THE FIELDS

Luke 2:8-12

CAROL 23 "Angels We Have Heard on High" (vs. 1)

THE ANGELS PROCLAIM

Luke 2:13-15

CAROL 23 "Angels We Have Heard on High" (vs. 3)

THE SHEPHERDS ARRIVE AND GLORIFY GOD

Luke 2:16-20

*CAROL 31 "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" (vs. 1 & 3)

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

CAROL "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" (vs. 1)

TIME OF PRAYER

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.

CAROL "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" (vs. 4)

SERVICE OF GIVING

Invitation

Offertory "Away in a Manger" V. Earl Copes

*Response

**To God, all glorious heav'nly Light,
To Christ revealed in earthly night,
To God the Spirit now we raise
Our joyful songs of thankful praise.**

*Prayer of Dedication

SHARING THE LIGHT

Distribution of the Light

Carol “Silent Night”

(As the Light is passed, tip unlit candles to receive the flame from lit candles. Please keep lit candles upright to prevent the spilling of hot wax.)

Silent Meditation

Prayer

*CAROL 40 “Joy to the World” (vs. 1, 2, & 4)

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

Charles Callahan

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We are glad that you have joined us for worship this Christmas Eve. The Staff at Congregational United Church of Christ wishes you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We thank you for your support over the past year.

TONIGHT WE WILL RECEIVE THE OFFERING FOR THE CHRISTMAS FUND. 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. Please remember that your generous contributions can and do make a difference in the lives of many people.

THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE WILL BE CLOSED from Monday through Wednesday, December 25-27, in celebration of Christmas and on Monday, January 1, in celebration of New Year’s Day.

NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31, our worship will be at the usual time, 10:15 a.m. A festive New Year’s Eve worship service is planned. Bill Lovin will be preaching. There will be no church school classes. Christian Education for all ages will resume on Sunday, January 7, 2024.

CELEBRATE EPIPHANY (the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles, the coming of the Magi) with us on Sunday, January 7, 2024. 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. We will also share in the sacrament of communion

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.



Want to give online? Scan the QR code for our giving app.
Your giving makes a world of difference.

WE LIVE STREAM 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 is the same each week.

RECORDINGS OF THE WORSHIP SERVICES are posted after worship on Sunday at <https://vimeo.com/channels/154m7852>. The recordings remain up permanently, so you can watch past worship services at your convenience or recommend them to a friend.