



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

WORSHIP FOR DECEMBER 24, 2020
CHRISTMAS EVE

You may want to have a candle to participate in the candle lighting while we sing "Silent Night."

"There must be always remaining in every life, some place for the singing of angels, some place for that which in itself is breathless and beautiful."

Howard Thurman

PRELUDE "In dulci jubilo" BWV 751 J.S. Bach

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHTING OF THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE
Bryon, Kathleen, and Nicole Day

CALL TO WORSHIP

Gather round the manger.

Come shelter in the stable.

Join with strangers and with friends.

Come all who long for God.

Unison

There is good news of great joy.

God comes to us this night,

A Child in our midst.

Come see what God has done.

CAROL

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” (vs. 1 & 3)

**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:

**O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.**

**Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God,
all glory in the highest! [Refrain]**

OPENING PRAYER

Glorious God, as you came at night when all was still, so enter our lives this night. You share our humanity; you know the struggle of our lives and understand the disquiet of our hearts. With grace and truth you come—to break the yoke that burdens us, to bestow peace upon us, to bring light to our darkness, and to fill the earth with joy.

Abide with us. Give us courage in the face of all that troubles us. Help us to hear and tell the good news of your peace among all people; in the name of Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Amen.

ANTHEM Wexford Carol

A DECREE GOES OUT Luke 2:1-7 Bea Hicks

CAROL “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 our king,
with peace to all on earth!**

**How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of 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.**

WATCHING IN THE FIELDS Luke 2:8-14 Margaret MacInnis

CAROL “Angels We Have Heard on High”

**Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o’er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.**

Refrain:

**Gloria in excelsis Deo,
gloria in excelsis Deo.**

**Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly song? [Refrain]**

**Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing.
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King. [Refrain]**

THE SHEPHERDS ARRIVE Luke 2:15-20 Kevin Koepnick

CAROL “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing” (vs. 1 & 3)

**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 hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"**

Refrain:

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

**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. [Refrain]**

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

CAROL 52 "Sheep Fast Asleep" (vs. 1)

**Sheep fast asleep, there on a hill,
Grass for their bed, all is still.
Cold winter night, the frost appears;
Shepherds keep watch by their fire.
Soft there a sound, far, far away;
Is it the stream? Wind at play?
Nay, friend, it is the heavenly choir,
Singing throughout the spheres.**

CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

CAROL (vs. 1-3) "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"

**It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to all,
from heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
to hear the angels sing.**

**Still through the cloven skies they come
with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats
o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains,
they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.**

**And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow,
look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
and hear the angels sing!**

TIME OF PRAYER

TIME OF GRATITUDE

“What Child Is This”

Paul Manz

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

SHARING THE LIGHT

Distribution of the Light

Carol “Silent Night” (vs. 1-3)

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.

Silent Meditation

Prayer

CAROL 40 “Joy to the World”

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

Let earth receive her king;

let every heart prepare him room,

and heaven and nature sing,

and heaven and nature sing,

and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

**Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let us our songs employ
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.**

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” Noel Rawsthorne

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.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP AND GALA RECEPTION—Thursday, December 24, starting at 5:30 p.m. The worship service can be viewed online [here](#). Our worship will include stirring organ music, an anthem by our virtual choir, a reading of the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke, lots of carols, and candle lighting. You may want to have a candle to participate in the candle lighting while we sing “Silent Night.” The Christmas Eve worship service will remain available to view at a later time and you can find it [here](#).

OUR GALA RECEPTION will follow on Zoom at 6:30 p.m. This year you will have to provide your own cookies and hot cider. And we will be able to see and talk with everyone who shows up! If we have a large crowd, we will set up some breakout rooms for small group conversations. The Zoom invitation went out earlier this week. If you still need it, please send Bill Lovin an email at uccicrev@uccic.org.

TONIGHT WE WILL RECEIVE THE OFFERING FOR THE CHRISTMAS FUND. This Fund provides pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retired church workers, both clergy and laity, and emergency assistance to the families of those currently working in churches.

THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS, December 27, join us for worship at 10:15 a.m. Bill Lovin will be preaching. Marie Von Behren will sing *Gesu Bambino* as a solo. A Zoom Coffee Hour will follow.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, 2021 at 10:15 we will celebrate Epiphany (the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles, the coming of the Magi) and the beginning of the New Year. We will bring our observance of Christmas to a conclusion, hearing the story of the Magi from the Gospel of Matthew.

ALTERNATIVE GIVING-2020: There is still time to give online to Project Holiday and Church World Service.

PROJECT HOLIDAY Project Holiday is CommUnity Food Bank's annual holiday meal distribution. Typically held the week before Christmas, **this distribution provides more than 1,500 Johnson County families with all the ingredients needed to make a traditional holiday dinner. Each \$25 donation will purchase a complete holiday meal for a local family in need.**

You can donate here: <https://builtbycommunity.org/project-holiday/> through December 31.

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

If you would like to give a gift through Church World Service, you can now do so through the special Congregational UCC site connected to the CWS site. Please note that this site will be available from November 29 through December 31. To reach the website, please follow this link: <https://fundraise.cwsglobal.org/uccic-best-gift>