



“Shepherds”—John August Swanson

CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
30 N. CLINTON ST.
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WORSHIP FOR DECEMBER 24, 2024
CHRISTMAS EVE

“Read the story as you may, make of it what you will. But do not miss the daring implication that the farthest reaches of the universe wait upon the humblest occurrences of this world. There is a star over you and over all whom you know. There are eternal implications in the scenes of earth; do not miss them—they are for the guidance of the wise. This life is a web of beauty and strength, holding the stars and little children together in a mighty purpose, larger than our understanding.”

Samuel Miller

PRELUDE “In dulci jubilo,” BWV 751 J. S. Bach

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Chuck Connerly, Liturgist

CHORAL INTROIT

LIGHTING OF THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE

Kyle Flippo and Rachel Slezak, Art Flippo and Lev Slezak

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, all who long for God.

There is good news of great joy!

God is not far from us

but comes to us this night as a child.

Come and see what God has done.

**God loves this world of flesh and bone, stone and tree,
sheep and ox, star and field.**

*CAROL 22 “Angels from the Realms of Glory” (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 hearts. Abide with us. Lift the burdens of all your people, give peace to your world, bring light out of the darkness, and fill the earth with joy.

Open our eyes to see that you 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. 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 (#22)

Saints, before the altar bending,

watching long in hope and fear,

suddenly the Word, descending,

here among us shall appear:

Come and worship, come and worship,

Worship Christ, the newborn King.

A DECREE GOES OUT Kathi Keogle
Luke 2:1-5
CAROL 44 “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (vs. 1 & 3)

**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.**

**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.**

SHELTERING IN A STABLE John Fieselmann
Luke 2:6-7
ANTHEM “I Wonder as I Wander” arr. John Rutter

WATCHING IN THE FIELDS Bea Hicks
Luke 2:8-12
CAROL 23 “Angels We Have Heard on High” (vs. 1 & 2)
**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]**

THE ANGELS PROCLAIM Andy Bertalotus

Luke 2:13-15

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

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

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

THE SHEPHERDS ARRIVE AND GLORIFY GOD Nadia Spragg

Luke 2:16-20

*CAROL 31 "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

CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

*CAROL 38 “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” (vs. 1 & 3)

**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.**

**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

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 38 “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” (vs. 4)

**For lo, the days are hastening on,
by prophet bards foretold,
when with the ever-circling years
comes round the age of gold;
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world give back the song
that now the angels sing.**

SERVICE OF GIVING

Invitation

Offertory "In Quiet Joy" Marcel Dupré

*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"

**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 night, holy night!
Wondrous star, lend thy light:
With the angels let us sing,
Alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born,
Christ the Savior is born.**

(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”

(Please extinguish your candle as the lights come up.)

**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 “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice” Paul Laubengayer

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Choir Director:	Dr. Chris Nakielski
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Sharyn Huriaux Reitz

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 Wednesday and Thursday, December 25 & 26, in celebration of Christmas and on Wednesday, January 1, in celebration of New Year's Day. Bill Lovin will be on vacation from Christmas through New Year's Day.

NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29, our worship will be at the usual time, 10:15 a.m. The Rev. Bob Molsberry will be preaching. There will be no church school classes.

CELEBRATE EPIPHANY (the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles, the coming of the Magi) with us on Sunday, January 5, 2025. 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.