

First Congregational United Church of Christ

December 24, 2022



Photo by Enno Limvere

Christmas Eve Service

Ministers: All who are a part of this church

Pastor: Rev. Enno K. Limvere

Musician: Karina Roth

Choir Director: Ann Russ

Advent Wreath and Peace Candle Lighter: Carol Winter

Readers: Bob Carter, Nancy Starr, Bruce Tyler, Nancy Giguere,
Linda Noble

Gathering Music

Words of Welcome

Prelude

Words to Light the Advent Candle – Christ Candle

People who have a Christmas tree: As we come to the end of Advent, may we find our journey blessed, our preparations done, and our hearts full.

People who have a manger or creche scene: May this celebration of the birth of Christ echo in the celebration of all births; for we are all your children, created in your image, and loved so dearly.

People who decked the halls: May our hearts, minds, souls, and bodies be filled with light. May the darkness of our nights reflect the darkness of the womb, with faith in your steadfast love, creating all things new.

Lighting of the Candle of Peace

People who believe in love: God of Christ, through Christ you know what it means to be born, vulnerable, and hungry. Through Christ, we have come to know deeper love, compassion, and that you are with us in each and every breath. As Advent turns into Christmas, may our lives show your love to the world, with hope, peace, joy, and love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Words of Poetry & Lighting the Candle of Peace

It is a custom in our congregation to light our Peace Candle during worship, as a witness to the Prince of Peace and our communal intention to be peace-makers as a Just Peace Church.

Christmas Eve by Christina Rossetti

*Christmas hath a darkness Brighter than the blazing noon,
Christmas hath a chillness Warmer than the heat of June,
Christmas hath a beauty Lovelier than the world can show:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus, Brought for us so low.*

*Earth, strike up your music Birds that sing and bells that ring;
Heaven hath answering music For all Angels soon to sing:
Earth, put on your whitest Bridal robe of spotless snow:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus Brought for us so low.*

Passing of the Peace

FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:2-7

² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.

³ You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴ For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. ⁶ For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will

establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

CAROL: Red Hymnal #90 “Angels We Have Heard on High” (versus 1 & 3)

1) Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains

Refrain:

Gloria (Gloria) in excelsis Deo
Gloria in excelsis Deo
Gloria in excelsis Deo

2) Come to Bethlehem and see
Him, whose birth the angels sing
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord the newborn King

(Refrain)

Type: Words and Music; First Line: Angels we have heard on high

Contributors: Traditional French carol, Lloyd Larson

SECOND READING: Psalm 96

¹ O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

² Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

³ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.

⁴ For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.

⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

⁶ Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

⁷ Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

⁸ Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.

⁹ Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

¹⁰ Say among the nations, “The LORD is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity.”

¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

¹² let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for

joy

¹³ before the LORD; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.

CAROL: Red Hymnal #100 “The First Nowell” (First verse only)

- 1) The first Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay:
In fields where they lay a keeping their sheep
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain:
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell
Born is the King of Israel.

Contributors: Allen James, John Stainer

Tune: © 1962 Lorenz Publishing Company, a division of The Lorenz Corporation (Admin. by Music Services)

THIRD READING: Titus 3:4-7

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹² training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

CAROL: Red Hymnal #99 “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (First verse only)

1. Oh 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 .

Type: Words and Music; First Line: O little town of Bethlehem

Language: English Text: Phillips Brooks, 1868, alt. Music: Lewis H. Redner, 1868. Contributors: ST. LOUIS

GOSPEL READING – Part 1 Luke 2:1-7

2 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

CAROL: Red Hymnal #93 “Away in the Manger” (All verses)

1. Away in a manger
No crib for a bed
The little Lord Jesus
Laid down His sweet head

The stars in the bright sky
Looked down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus

2. Asleep on the hay
The cattle are lowing
The Baby awakes
But little Lord Jesus
No crying He makes
I love You, Lord Jesus
Look down from the sky
And stay by my side
Until morning is nigh

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GOSPEL READING – Part 2

Luke 2:8-14

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a Manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

CAROL: Red Hymnal #115 “What Star Is This” (verses 1 & 3)

1 What star is this, with beams so bright,
More lovely than the noonday light?
'Tis sent to announce a newborn king,
Glad tidings of our God to bring.

3 O Jesus, while the star of grace
Impels us on to seek thy face,
Let not our slothful hearts refuse
The guidance of thy light to use.

Contributors: Public Domain

Tune: Michael Praetorius Text: Original text by Coffin; tr. by Chandler; Public Domain

GOSPEL READING – Part 3

Luke 2:15-20

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at

what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer: Our Father/Mother God, who are in heaven, holy is your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

CAROL: Red Hymnal #313 "Joy to the World" (All verses)

- 1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

- 2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

- 3 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.

Type: Words and Music; First Line: Joy to the world! The Lord is come;

Language: English Contributors: Isaac Watts, George Handel Tune: Music: George F. Handel, 1685-1759, in T. Hawkes' Collection of Tunes, 1833. Text: Text: Ps 96; Isaac Watts, 1674-1748.

Our Time of Giving

Doxology

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen*

Lighting of Candles

Closing Hymn Red Hymnal #95 Silent Night, Holy Night

- 1 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.

- 2 Silent night, holy night!
 Shepherds quake at the sight.
 Glories stream from heaven afar,
 heav'nly hosts sing, Alleluia!
 Christ, the Savior, is born!
 Christ, the Savior, is born!

- 3 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.

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Contributors: Joseph Mohr, Franz Gruber

Benediction

Sending Music