



First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
December 17, 2023



## Third Sunday of Advent: Joy

### Christmas Pageant

Partners in Ministry: **All who are a part of this church**

Pastor: **Rev. Enno K. Limvere**

Musician: **Ben Nichols** Choir Director: **Ann Russ**

Peace Candle Lighter: **Alex Blust** Liturgist: **Carol Winters**

Greeter: **Barbara Chiles** Usher: **John Bottger**

Coffee-Hour Host: **Nancy Starr**

[grandmaraisucc.org](http://grandmaraisucc.org) ~ (218) 387-2113  
300 West 2nd Street, Grand Marais, MN 55604

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**Gathering Music**  
**Words of Welcome**  
**Prelude**

**Lighting of Advent Candle: Joy**

One: Ancestors of Advent, we call upon you in this season of waiting, of journey, and creation-time.

**All: Your story is our story, your songs we still sing, your silence sits like a friend beside ours.**

One: On this third week of Advent, we gather around this wreath, hand in hand like Mary and Elizabeth,

**All: welcoming in the joy of two cousins meeting womb to womb.**

*(light third candle)*

One: May we call on such jubilation to awaken us into worship.

**All: Come, let us magnify the greatness of God with this ritual's delight. 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 peacemakers as a Just Peace Church.

**Christmas Spirit**  
**by Betty Murray**

The crisp, cool air of December  
Was filled with the chickadee's song –  
"Christmas time Joy, Christmas time joy."  
The Chickadee merrily sang.  
A little white rabbit perked up his ears,  
What is Christmas time?" he asked.

"It comes once a year bringing peace and  
joy.

It's a spirit that touches your heart.  
And fills it with love and kind thoughts.  
The whole world sings and is happy.  
We remember a wee special baby  
In a manger born long ago.

A star shone over him sleeping  
And wise Men brought gifts to the babe.  
The shepherds saw angels in heaven  
As they sang and rejoiced at his birth."  
The little white rabbit confused  
Asked, "Why was this baby so special?"

The chickadee said in a voice full of awe,  
"This tiny baby was the son of God.  
He taught us how to live good lives  
Full of peace and love for each other.  
How to do good things and be helpful.  
To forgive and trust in our God."

"What a wonderful world," the white rabbit  
sighed,

"If we only lived as he taught us."  
"We try once a year," the chickadee said,  
"That's what Christmas is all about.  
We go to church and sing Christmas songs.  
We give gifts and put lights on our trees.

We try to make others feel happy.  
We remember the poor and help those in  
need

That makes us feel good, and we smile.  
So, little white rabbit, go make someone  
smile

And I'll sing a song or two. We'll make  
Christmas last.

We'll spread Christmas Spirit the whole  
year through."

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERONE!

**Passing of the Peace**

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## Act 1- Narrative of Nativity

### Scene 1 - Don't Stop Believing – On a Journey

Narrator 1: A long, long time ago in a Galilee far, far away....

Narrator 2: A young couple who traveled to Bethlehem to be enrolled in the census. This was the hometown of Joseph, who was engaged to Mary. Mary was with child, and because of this, Joseph's relatives refused to welcome them into their homes.

Narrator 1: They went to an inn but there was no room except in the stable, so the innkeeper allowed them to stay there, for a small fee of course. In this place filled with animals, straw, and angels, Mary gave birth to their first child.

Narrator 2: Too early for a flash back? Imagine if you will... When Joseph found that Mary was with child, he was troubled, but an angel of Lord appeared to him in a dream, "Joseph, Son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus"

Townspeople: "Look, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him 'Emmanuel' which means "God is with us."

**Christmas Carol – Red Hymnal # 86** O Come, O Come Immanuel (vs. 1 & 4) ([click here](#))

## Act 1 – Narrative of Nativity

### Scene 2 - Shepherds on a Slope

Narrator 3: In a place that was not the end of the world, but visible from Hovland...

Narrator 4: There were shepherds out in the fields, doing what shepherds do, watching the flock, the stars, and wishing they had better cell phone reception or Wi-Fi in this remote place so they could watch Charlie Brown's Christmas Special, The Grinch, Elf, or White Christmas on their smart phones.

Narrator 3: When suddenly they saw a light! And they were terrified because they knew that neither UPS nor the Indian food truck ever came out that far at night, not even with its headlights on high beam. But no! the light was an angel.

Angel: "Do not be afraid – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day, the Messiah. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

Narrator 4: And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

Angels: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth, peace among those whom God loves"

**Christmas Carol – Red Hymnal #90** Angels We Have Heard on High ([click here](#))

## Act 1 - Narrative of the Nativity

### Scene 3 - Wise Ones See the Light

Narrator 5: Back then, the people thought the world was flat and that everything revolved around them. So, this scene literally comes from the middle of nowhere, on the North side, over on Hungry Jack.

Narrator 6: There were people – Wise Ones - who studied the stars in the sky, believing they could predict the future, or maybe the character of a person born under a certain constellation, or perhaps what was happening throughout the world.

*continued on next page*

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**Narrator 5:** What these Wise Ones saw was a new star that rose in the East - stars rise in the West don't ya know, - and they interpreted this to be a prophecy. So, they gathered up their belongings, stopped at Ben Franklin to get some presents, and headed out.

**Narrator 6:** What is often missed in this story is that the journey lasted about 2 years. Once they even had to stop and ask for directions. But they were warned not go back to King Herod because he was up to no good in the neighborhood. You have to come back at Epiphany to hear the rest of the story... For now, the Wise Ones continue their journey.

**Wise One:** I think we go this way...

**Townspeople:** "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

**Musical Interlude – We Three Kings**

### **Act 1 - Narrative on the Nativity**

#### **Scene 4 - Meanwhile, back at the Manger & Sharing Good News**

**Narrator 1:** Meanwhile, back at the manger, things are getting pretty crowded as everyone gathers around the new parents and infant.

**Narrator 2:** The shepherds are trying to tell the people about the visit of the angels and how the angels announced that this child will be the Messiah and bring joy to all people.

**Narrator 1:** "Any-who..." All who heard this, even some of those relatives who were feeling guilty about allowing their new family member to be born in such a place, were amazed and some even believed these shepherds, even though they were definitely not locals.

**Narrator 2:** The shepherds, having found the chosen one, realized they left the sheep out in the middle of nowhere and decided it was a long night. But they couldn't stop talking, glorifying, and praising God for all they had seen and heard while they returned.

**Townspeople:** "But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart."

**Christmas Carol – Red Hymnal #93** Away in the Manger ([click here](#))

### **Act 2 - Jesus Christ in the 21st & a fifth Century**

#### **Scene 1 - In the Time of Uncertainty**

**Narrator 3:** In the Gospel of Matthew, as part of story of the Wisemen and King Herod, Joseph and Mary flee from Bethlehem after Joseph is warned by an angel in a dream that King Herod was coming after Jesus. After King Herod realized he had been tricked by the Wise Ones, he wanted to protect himself from this future king. So, he sent his troops to kill all children under the age of 2 years old in the town of Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph did find refuge in Egypt, but many families in Bethlehem did not escape the violence.

**Narrator 4:** In our time of political unrest and war, we worry about the future of our children and grandchildren. With the global climate crisis and rising authoritarianism around the world, the future can look bleak. We fear what is coming. Let us remember that there have been climate crises, tyrants, and wars in our past, BUT they do not continue forever.

**Narrator 3:** In the Gospel of Luke, Joseph and Mary also are dealing with a powerful empire that forces its will on the poor and those with very little hope. They live in a community whose wealth is taken by those who already have too much. They are forced to travel while Mary is pregnant, they barely find a safe place to have her child, and then they must flee for their own safety.

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**Narrator 4:** In this time of political uncertainty, let us learn once again that the size of our homes, bank accounts, or power ultimately count for little. What we need is compassion, family, and the resources to help those who are vulnerable. We need hope, peace, joy, and love.

**Townspeople:** “The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and the shadow of death, light has dawned.”

**Christmas Carol – Red Hymnal #102** In the Bleak Midwinter (1st verse only) ([click here](#))

### **Act 2 - Jesus Christ in the 21st & a Fifth Century**

#### **Scene 2 - Centering on the Child of Bethlehem**

**Narrator 5:** Does it make a difference to you, to me; to realize that Joseph and Mary faced hardships, and rejection; that they became refugees & had to flee for their lives? That even in the midst of welcoming a beautiful baby and learning of the coming Messiah, their lives were not perfect?

**Narrator 6:** For God so loved the world, for God so loves you, that Jesus came into this world bringing good news of great joy of the child. “By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

**Narrator 5:** Mary proclaimed, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, who looked down with favor on the lowliness of the servant. God’s mercy is for all who are loved, from generation to generation. God has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts, brought down the powerful and lifted up the lowly, filling the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.”

**Narrator 6:** For a child has been born for us and this one shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Strength of God, Eternal Protector, Champion of Peace. Christ’s love shall grow continually, and there shall be peace for God’s kingdom. Christ 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.

**All:** “For nothing is impossible with God. Here I am, the servant of our Creator; let it be with me according to your word, love, and vision.”

**Christmas Carol – Red Hymnal #105** Go, Tell It on the Mountain ([click here](#))

#### **Joys and Concerns, Pastoral Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer**

**Our Father, Mother God, you are in heaven, holy is your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen**

#### **News of God at Work in our Congregation & Community**

##### **Our Time of Giving**

##### **Doxology**

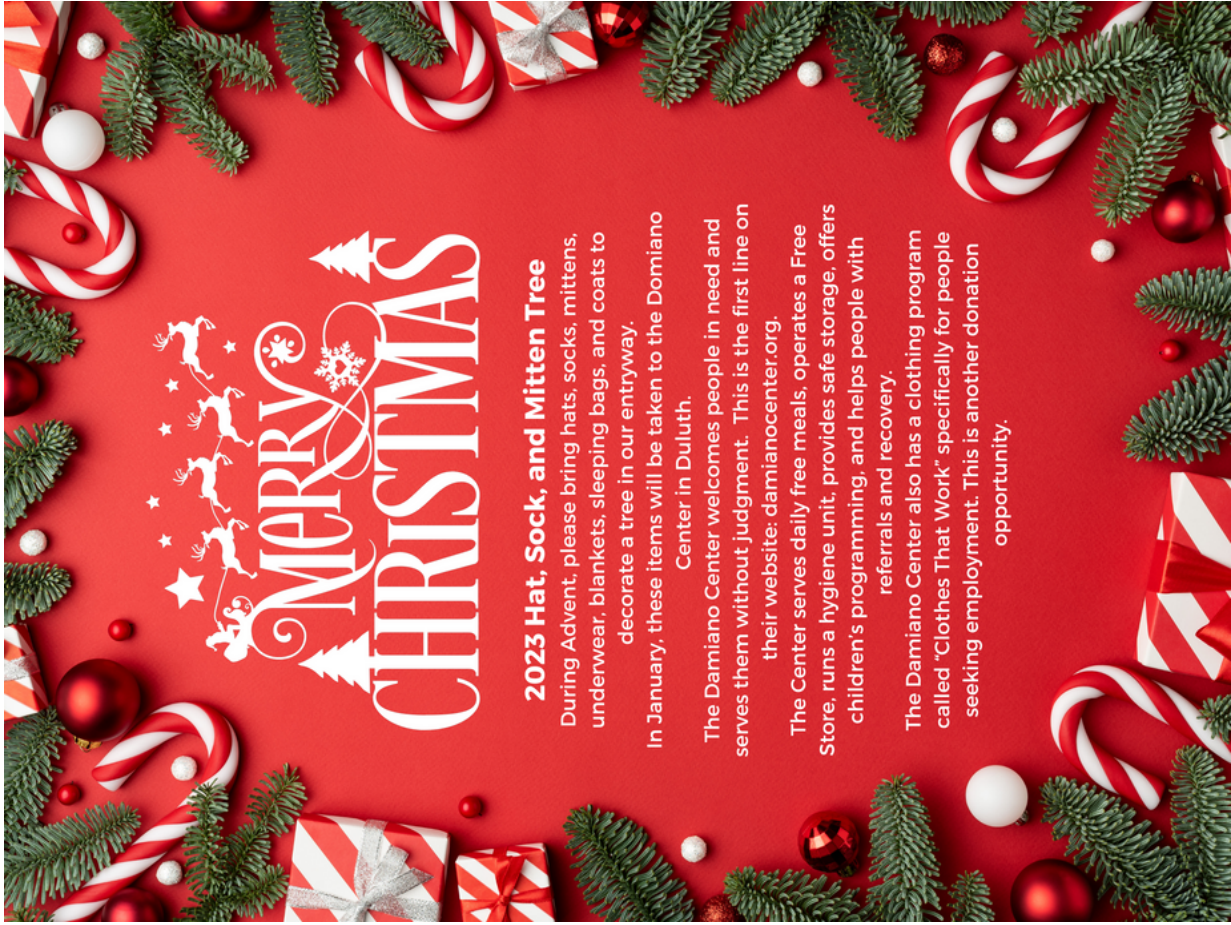
*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God, for all that love has done.  
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen*

**Closing Hymn – Red Hymnal #313** Joy to the World ([click here](#))

##### **Benediction**

##### **Sending Music**

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### 2023 Hat, Sock, and Mitten Tree

During Advent, please bring hats, socks, mittens, underwear, blankets, sleeping bags, and coats to decorate a tree in our entryway.

In January, these items will be taken to the Domiano Center in Duluth.

The Damiano Center welcomes people in need and serves them without judgment. This is the first line on their website: [damianocenter.org](http://damianocenter.org).

The Center serves daily free meals, operates a Free Store, runs a hygiene unit, provides safe storage, offers children's programming, and helps people with referrals and recovery.

The Damiano Center also has a clothing program called "Clothes That Work" specifically for people seeking employment. This is another donation opportunity.



## "YOUR CHECK ARRIVED JUST IN TIME!"

Each year, the Pension Boards receives many notes and letters of thanks from retired United Church of Christ pastors, their surviving spouses, and children, letting us know what a difference your gifts to the Christmas Fund have made in their lives. Here are just a few excerpts:

"On behalf of my mother, I would like to thank you for the generous check from the Pension Boards. She has recently moved to assisted living at the age of 101! She was choir director at her church up until last year and was playing the organ for worship services once a month for the past 20 years. As a member of the UCC, I have often contributed to the Veterans of the Cross offering and it is wonderful to know my Mom is a beneficiary."

"What a joy to receive a check from the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance as a surprise Christmas gift! My wife (88) and I (95) thank you! It will help greatly in paying our bills at year's end."

"I want to thank you for the generous \$500 that was given to me by your Board. It really has been appreciated as I paid my house taxes for the winter. It would have been a very difficult burden without your check."

"Your check arrived just in time! It helped pay for a much-needed repair to my car, which I rely on since I live in a remote area and need transportation to medical appointments. I feel blessed to be remembered by you and the members of our UCC churches!"

### In 2022, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 218 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,042,726)
- Health benefits supplementation for 86 retired clergy and lay employees (\$181,389)
- Emergency grants for 55 individuals and families (\$138,022)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 479 retired clergy and lay employees (\$278,500)

## THE CHRISTMAS FUND

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund  
Give online at [www.christmasfund.org](http://www.christmasfund.org).

# 2024 PLEDGE DRIVE



20

19 Pledges (\$65,000.00)



# Christmas at First Congregational

First Congregational UCC  
300 2nd Street West, Grand Marais

**17**  
DECEMBER

### Christmas Pageant

9:00 AM Rehearsal for everyone. No sign up or other rehearsals. Just show up!  
10:30 AM Worship & Christmas Pageant.

**17**  
DECEMBER

### Christmas Cookie Sale

11:45 AM in Fellowship Hall  
This is a fundraiser for our Pizza and Social Justice (youth group)

**17**  
DECEMBER

### Blue Christmas Service

5:00 PM in Sanctuary  
For any and all who struggle this time of year.

**20**  
DECEMBER

### Christmas Carol Singing

6:00 PM TO 8ish  
We will meet at the church building and then go to Care Center and other places

**24**  
DECEMBER

### Christmas Eve Service

9:30-11:30 Loaves and Brunch at the Limverre's: 402 West 1st Avenue. Bring Muffins, doughnuts, or fruit to share.  
5:00 PM

We will hear the story, sing carols, and light the candles.

More Info:

[www.grandmaraisucc.org](http://www.grandmaraisucc.org)



## Announcements



**Prayer List:** Paul Leintz, Rhonda Silence, Meredith Eliot (Church-Davison), Vicki Biggs-Anderson, Paulette Anholm, Mike Carlson, Sally Dunn, The Carter Family, All Victims of Gun Violence, Immigrants and Refugees, Countries of Ukraine, Sudan, Israel/Palestine, and Planet Earth.

**At home and Care Center:** Jean Ljungkull, Nona Smith, Lou Goodell, Bev Denyes, Nancy Cihlar, and Tom Hedstrom.

### **Measure of our Faithfulness:**

The First Congregational UCC adopted a 2023 Budget at the Annual Meeting on 28 January 2023, showing a need for a yearly income of \$164,110.00.

After fifty weeks, the Budget Donations and Income should be \$154,358.26. The Actual Donations so far this year have been \$147,554.94.

-Kevin LeVoir, Treasurer

## This Week at the Church

### **Sunday, December 17**

9:00 AM - Christmas Pageant Practice

10:30 AM – Worship Service – Inside AND ON ZOOM, 3rd Sunday of Advent: Joy. On this Sunday, we gather together to walk through, stumble through, and live out the story of our the Messiah’s birth. We will once again gather at 9:00 am this Sunday for all who wish to share in a part of our Christmas Pageant. As we continue the Advent journey, don’t just listen to it again, but re-imagine it for our day.

11:45 AM – Christmas Cookie Sale by Pizza and Social Justice

5:00 PM – Blue Christmas Service - As the nights get longer and longer, and for some the holiday season is not of joy but of sorrow when loved ones are no longer with us, or of depression as the suns hides and we feel all alone. This service is to acknowledge that for some, this season is full of mixed emotions and darkness. God’s love is present, even in the darkness.

### **Monday, December 18**

11:00 AM - Spring Forest Qi Gong  
2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons  
3:00 - 5:00 PM - Food Shelf  
7:00 PM - Al Anon

### **Tuesday, December 19**

2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons  
5:00 PM - Pastoral Relations

### **Wednesday, December 20**

2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons  
6:00 PM - Caroling  
6:00 PM - Confirmation

### **Thursday, December 21**

10:00 AM - Tai Chi  
12:00 AM - Women’s AA  
2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons

### **Friday, December 22**

7:00 AM - AA  
8:00 AM - Harbor Watch  
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons  
7:30 PM - AA

### **Saturday, December 23**

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM - Piano Lessons

### **Sunday, December 24**

No Morning Service  
9:30 - 11:30 Loaves and Brunch at the Limvere’s  
5:00 PM – Worship Service – Inside AND ON ZOOM, 4th Sunday of Advent: Love and Christmas Eve. As Christmas Eve falls upon a Sunday, the church leadership decided to just have one worship service this day, which will be in the evening starting at 5:00. Our Christmas Eve service will be centered around the story as told by the Gospel of Luke, carol singing, and lighting of the candles. We welcome all to join us for this very special service.



Red Hymnal # 86 O Come, O Come Immanuel (vs.  
1 & 4)

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here,  
Until the Son of God appear.

*Refrain:* Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

4. O come, Desire of nations,  
bind all peoples in one heart and mind;  
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease;  
Fill cause the whole world with heaven's peace.

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*Words, Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum, 1710  
Tr. John M. Neale, 1851, Sts. 1, 2, alt.  
Tr. Henry S. Coffin, 1916, Sts. 3, 4  
Used with permission from Harper and Rows, Publishers  
Tune, Adapted from Plainsong  
Thomas Helmore, 1854  
One-License No. A-738474*



## Red Hymnal #90 Angels We Have Heard on High

1. 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

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be  
Which inspire your heav'nly song?

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

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*Words, Traditional French Carol  
The New Church Hymnal Copyright 1937, renewed 1965,  
Fleming H. Revell Co.  
Tune, French Carol Melody  
One-License No. A-738474*



## Red Hymnal #93 Away in the Manger

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,  
asleep on the hay

2. The cattle are lowing,  
the baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus  
no crying he makes.  
I love thee, Lord Jesus!  
Look down from the sky,  
And stay by my side  
until morning is nigh.

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*Words, Anon. American Carol, c. 1884  
Tune, William J. Kirkpatrick,  
Harm. by John Ferguson  
One-License No. A-738474*



Red Hymnal #102 In the Bleak Midwinter (1st  
verse only)

1. In the bleak midwinter,  
Frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron,  
Water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,  
Snow on snow,  
In the bleak midwinter,  
Long ago.

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*Words, Christina G. Rossetti, 1872; alt.*

*Tune, Gustav T. Holst; 1906*

*Music used with permission of Oxford University Press*

*One-License No. A-738474*



## Red Hymnal #105 Go, Tell It on the Mountain

*Refrain:* Go, tell it on the mountain,  
Over the hills and everywhere;  
Go, tell it on the mountain  
That Jesus Christ is born!

1. While shepherds kept their watching,  
O'er silent flocks by night,  
Beheld through-out the heavens,  
There shone a holy light.

2. The shepherds feared and trembled  
When lo! above the earth  
Rang out the angel chorus  
That hailed our Savior's birth.

3. Down in a lowly manger  
The humble Christ was born,  
and God sent us salvation  
That blessed Christ was born.

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*Words, African-American Spiritual  
Adapt. by John W. Work  
Used by permission of Mrs. John W. Work, Sr.  
One-License No. A-738474*



## Closing Hymn – Red Hymnal #313 Joy to to World

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, rock, 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 this righteousness,  
And wonders of his love,  
And wonders of his love,  
And wonders, wonders, of his love.

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*Words, Isaac Watts, 1719*

*Tune, Attr. to George F. Handel, 1742*

*Arr. by Lowell Mason, 1839*

*One-License No. A-738474*

