



**BETHLEHEM UNITED
CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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December 25, 2024

Christmas Day Worship

Worship Leader: Pastor Randy Koppenhaver

Organist: Polly Jeanty

If listening from your car, please tune to 101.3 FM

***= Please rise in body or spirit**

CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: as you inhale, say the first part of the prayer to yourself, and say the second part as you exhale. Repeat 5x

Joy to the World :: The Lord has Come

RINGING OF THE BELLS

CALL TO WORSHIP AND LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE {a}

One: We gather to celebrate the birth of Christ, the Prince of Peace.

All: With each candle we light, we commit ourselves to seeking hope, peace, joy and love.

One: We light the Christ candle to shine into the world, reminding us of the new life promised through Jesus' birth. (Light the Christ candle)

One: May the warmth and light of Christ comfort all people, bringing courage to the weary and strength to the oppressed.

All: Holy One, by the power of your Spirit, help us to shine your light brightly to the world. Affirm within us the conviction to show hope, peace, joy and love throughout our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

HYMN/CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP #107 all "Joy to the World"

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

*OPENING PRAYER {c}

One: Mary's child, born in poverty, born far from home;

All: We come to worship Jesus, isolated from his wider family, vulnerable as a newborn.

One: Mary's child, a source of wonder, a source of inspiration;

All: We come to worship Jesus, gracefully given, a source of grace to the powerless and dispirited.

One: Mary's child, a threat to the powerful, a threat to the religious;

All: We come to worship Jesus, hope to the oppressed, fresh inspiration to the questioning.

One: Mary's child, objective of the despised shepherds, and of the star-seekers;

All: We come to worship Jesus, baby most adored, with a future both world- and life-changing.

HYMN #123

"Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

PRAYER OF AFFIRMATION {c}

One: God's love will prevail in spite of loneliness;

All: Within the holy family, far from support, far from friends, God's love was found.

One: God's love will prevail, in spite of loss;

All: Within the holy family, deprived of shelter at a crucial time, God's love was found.

One: God's love will prevail in spite of fear;

All: Within the holy family, threatened by Herod, God's love was found.

One: God's love will prevail in spite of despair;

All: Within the holy family, forced to become refugees in Egypt, God's love was found. (time for reflection)

WORDS OF GRACE {c}

One: Nothing can separate us from the love of God, as we have experienced it in Jesus Christ.

**All: It was there for us in the past,
it is with us right now,
it will be up ahead of us in the future.**

One: A love without exceptions, a love without boundaries, a love whose power cannot be broken.

All: Thanks be to you, O God, ever present, ever loving. Amen.

*RESPONSE

“Gloria in Excelsis Deo”

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Psalm 97 – p. 678 of hymnal – Leader reads odd verses, people read even

Titus 3:4–7

But when the goodness and loving-kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Luke 2:8–20

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’ ¹³And 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!’

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.’ ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it

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

*HYMN #108 vs. 1,2,6

“The First Nowell”

LITANY FOR CHRISTMAS DAY by Fran Pratt, 2015

Gracious, generous God:

On this day we celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ, Your Son, Your Self in human form.

We celebrate the Son of God.

We are transfixed by the story of Jesus.

We looked for a warrior;

You sent a baby.

We looked for royalty;

You were born to peasants.

We looked for power

You showed us meekness.

We looked among rulers and politicians;

You were found among cattle and shepherds.

We looked for military victory;

You gave us resurrection.

We looked for riches;

You gave us selflessness.

We looked for a king;

You gave us a servant.

We worship Jesus, the humble hero of God's Redemption Story.

May we become more sensitive to the themes of that story

seeking peace,

embracing vulnerability,

humbling ourselves,

looking for glory in lowly places.

May we recognize our part in the story,

our place as Christ-followers

our calling to gentleness and humility

our opportunities to give our most profound gifts.

May we grow ever more like Jesus, and live in the light of His presence and example. **Amen**

*HYMN #125 vs. 1,2,4

“Angels from the Realm of Glory”

HOLY COMMUNION

(God’s table is open to ALL, regardless of affiliation or membership. Please hold the elements until all have been served and we will partake together. All bread is gluten free. The inner circles are grape juice, the outer rings are wine.)

INVITATION

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And with you also.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth...we join the whole creation to lift our hearts in joyful praise:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

We give you thanks, holy God...and to proclaim the mystery of our faith:

Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.

CONSECRATION OF THE ELEMENTS

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

THE DISTRIBUTION

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (worshiptraining.com)

As this bread is Christ’s body for us, send us out to be the body of Christ in the world. Empower us by your Spirit, O God, to be Christ’s presence in the world even as Jesus was God-with-us. Give us courage to speak his truth, to seek his justice, and to love with his love. Keep us faithful in your service until Christ comes in final victory and we shall feast with all your saints in the joy of your eternal realm. Through Christ, with Christ, in

Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are yours, almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

RESPONSE #82 v. 1

“O Come let us Adore Him”

PASTORAL PRAYER ... LORD’S PRAYER

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.

*HYMN #121 all

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

CALL TO THE OFFERING^(B) (Jingle Change for the month of December supports the Christmas Fund)

OFFERTORY

*OFFERTORY RESPONSE Doxology to tune of “The First Noel”

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,

Praise God all creatures here below.

Praise God above ye, heavenly host,

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel

Born is the King of Israel.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION ^(c)

One: We offer our gifts for blessing, O God.

All: **We offer our gifts, O God, as the angels offered praise;**

we offer our time, O God, as the shepherds offered an amazing witness;

we offer our talent, O God, as the Magi faithfully and fearlessly offered gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The offerings on that first Christmas are a blessing to us today.

One: We know you will bless our offerings for the present-day work of Jesus Christ. Amen.

*CLOSING SONG #97 all

“Good Christian Friends Rejoice”

COMMISSIONING {c}

One: Look to the Holy Child, and encourage all who nurture children.

All: We look to the Holy Family, and promote love within the family circle.

One: Look to the Incarnate One, and see the Divine shine through the ordinary.

All: We look to God's Anointed, and prepare a place for him in our hearts.

One: Look to God's Precious One, and see the beloved who was not afraid to venture out.

All: We look to the Chosen One of God, who will go with us on our life's journey.

POSTLUDE

**liturgies and prayers used with permission from (a) ucc.org, and (b) <https://presbyterian.ca/worship/> (c) Sparks, David. *Prayers to Share-Year C*, Wood Lake Books, 2002

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- There will be no Sunday School next Sunday. Sunday school and Confirmation classes will reconvene on Sunday, Jan 5.
- Food Drive!! Please continue to bring in donations for the Reverse Advent Calendar through Dec. 29.
- If any individuals or groups are seeking a recipient for end-of-the-year financial donations, United Church Camps, Inc (Moon Beach, Daycholah, Cedar Valley) is holding a capital campaign called Roots & Wings to support our church camps. See Randy for more info.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS -See flyers in fellowship hall for more details

- The Sheboygan County Warming Center is a mission of several churches in the city of Sheboygan, including St. John's UCC. This winter the shelter will be operated at St. Luke United Methodist Church. They are seeking donations of clothing, bedding, travel-sized toiletries, and shelf-stable snacks, along with bus passes and Kwik Trip gift cards. See flyer for more info. Bring your donations to Pastor Randy and he will get them to Sheboygan.



Those in our thoughts and prayers:

Those Grieving:

Mark Beitzel
Gary Steinhardt

Those struggling with health issues:

Gary Rabe	Heidi Konen
Will Mathes	Nancy Zimmermann
Jill Wehmeyer-Sheets	Julie and Addison
Brad Westphalen	Darlene Horneck
Jessica Horneck	Mary Beth Molitor
Marie Rietbrock	Dawson Horneck
Tom Lefeber	
Emily (Melissa's cousin)	

Those unable to worship with us:

Merlin Nimmer Helen Henning

2024 Bethlehem UCC Leadership Team

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