

**United Church of Christ  
Norwich, NY  
Christmas Eve - December 24, 2020**

**A TIME OF GATHERING AS WE PREPARE TO WORSHIP GOD**

**WELCOME** (Rev. John Steitz)

**PRELUDE**

*Gloria!*

UCC Hand Bell Choir (Recorded 12/15/19)

Dan R. Edwards  
based on the hymn tunes  
BRANLE DE L'OFFICIEL and GLORIA

*O Holy Night*

Jason Handy, piano

Music by Adolphe Charles Adam  
Arranged by Mark Hayes

*Some Children See Him*

Meena Conant, voice and piano

by Alfred Burt and Wihla Hutson

*Es Ist Ein' Ros'*

Cheri Oakley, flute; Jason Handy, piano

Arranged by John Purifoy  
Tune: Geistliche Kirchengesange

**MISSION MOMENT – Christmas Fund** (Joan Griffith)

**CALL TO WORSHIP – ADVENT CANDLES**

**CANTICLE – O God of Love**

Tune: HESPERUS

Words by J. F. Connolly

O God of Light with us this day,  
In Christ You share Your loving way.  
Hope, peace and joy in Christ abide  
Present and with us and at our side.

**LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE** (Pastor John, Penny and Catherine)

The day we have waited for has come! Christmas celebrates the coming of God in Jesus Christ. The values of Advent ... HOPE ... PEACE ... LOVE ... and JOY are unified in the coming of CHRIST.

We light this candle as a sign of HOPE.  
We light this candle as a sign of PEACE.  
We light this candle as a sign of LOVE.  
We light this candle as a sign of JOY.

**PRAYER:**

O almighty God, by the birth of your holy child Jesus you gave us a great light to dawn in our darkness. Grant that in Jesus' light we may see light.

We light the center candle to celebrate the birth of JESUS!  
O come, O come, Emmanuel.

In the beginning was Logos, and Logos was with God, and Logos was God. Logos was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Logos, and without Logos not one thing came into being. What has come into being was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. And Logos became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen the glory of Logos, the glory as of a parent's only child, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-5; 14)

God, today we are thankful for the birth of your son, Jesus, and for the lessons he teaches us about how to love one another. Help us throughout the year to share hope, peace, love, and joy wherever we go. Amen.

**\*HYMN** *Joy to the World* #132

Isaac Watts, 1719  
Tune: ANTIOCH Lowell Mason, 1836

## CHILDREN'S MOMENT (Linda Oehme)

### BRINGING CHRIST'S PEACE INTO THE WORLD

ONE: May the peace of the newborn Christ be with you.

**MANY: And also with you.**

**INTERLUDE** *Let Us Break Bread Together*  
Bob Oehme, organ

African American Spiritual  
Harmonization David Hurd, 1983

### WE SHARE IN THE LORD'S TABLE

(Pat Burke, Judy Smith, Mary Williams, Pastor John)

#### COMMUNION PRAYERS

ONE: This table is open to all who call Jesus the Christ, all who wish to share in the community of God's people.

**MANY: It is therefore also true that the forgiveness of God is available to all, and we rest assured of this forgiveness through Jesus, the Christ. Amen.**

ONE: God be with you.

**MANY: And also with you.**

ONE: Be free with your hearts.

**MANY: We give them freely to God.**

ONE: Let us give thanks to God.

**MANY: It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

ONE: We now join our voices with all those who proclaim, worship, and glorify You,  
O God Most Holy.

#### SONG OF PRAISE

**MANY: Holy, Holy, Holy God of love and majesty, the whole universe speaks of your glory, O God Most High. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God! Hosanna in the highest!**

ONE: Holy God, we praise You for Your creation, and remember Your covenant made with Your people, shown to us in fullness with the birth of Your child, Jesus, and completed in the resurrection of the Christ. We remember, too, that on the night of betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples saying: This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, Jesus took the cup, saying: This is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

Consecrate, therefore, by Your Holy Spirit, O God, these gifts, and bless us that, as we receive them, we may be united with Christ and one another, and continue to be faithful in all things. Amen.

ONE: Let us proclaim with these ancient words what we believe.

**MANY: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

ONE: Let us now pray The Lord's Prayer.

#### THE 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

#### BREAKING BREAD AND POURING WINE

Through the broken bread we participate in the body of Christ.

Through the cup of blessing we participate in the new life Christ gives.

#### SHARING OF THE ELEMENTS

Eat this for it is the body of Christ, broken for you.

Drink this, for it is the blood of Christ, shed for you.

#### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

**We thank You God, for inviting us to this table where we have known the presence of Christ and have received all Christ's gifts. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and let us show forth Your presence in our lives: We pray these things in the name of Jesus, the Christ. Amen.**

**INTERLUDE** *Meditation on the Coventry Carol*  
Bob Oehme, organ

David Lasky

### **WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD**

**SCRIPTURE** - Isaiah 9:2-7 (Gary Gray)

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.  
<sup>3</sup> 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.  
<sup>4</sup> 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.  
<sup>5</sup> For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.  
<sup>6</sup> 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.  
<sup>7</sup> 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.

**ANTHEM** *A Great Light!*  
from "Were You There on That Christmas Night"

Words and Music by Lloyd Larson based on Isaiah 9:2,6  
Quoting *Silent Night! Holy Night!* (STILLE NACHT) by Franz Gruber  
*On Christmas Night All Christians Sing* (SUSSEX CAROL) Trad. English Carol  
*Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus* (HYFRYDOL) by Charles Wesley and Rowland H. Prichard

Were you there, were you there on that Christmas night,  
when the world was filled with a holy light?  
Were you there to behold when the wonder foretold came to earth?

Did you hear how the choirs of angels sang at the glory of the sight?  
Did you hear how the bells of heaven rang all through the night?

The people walking in darkness shall see a great light!  
The people living in darkness on them a light will shine!  
And the glory of God shall be shown, the will of God made known.  
The people walking in darkness shall see a great light!

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,  
and the government shall be on his shoulders,  
and the government shall be on his shoulders.  
He shall be called Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;  
dear Desire of ev'ry nation, Joy of ev'ry longing heart.  
The people walking in darkness shall see a great light!

**SCRIPTURE** - Luke 2:1-14 (Miranda Hunter)

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>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.

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>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: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

**ANTHEM** *Never Been a Night Like This!*

Words and Music by Lloyd Larson based on Luke 2:8-16  
Quoting *O Come All ye Faithful* (ADESTE FIDELIS)

Words and music by John F. Wade, translated by Frederick Oakeley

There were shepherds in the field keeping watch at night  
when out of the dark, a most unusual sight.  
An angel of the Lord came with news of joy,  
"The Savior's been born tonight, a baby boy!"

The shepherds rejoiced on that Christmas night  
as the heavenly host turned the darkness bright.  
There'd never been a night like this before!

There'd never been a night like this before  
with the angels around singin' praise to the Lord.  
The glory of the lord was revealed that night!  
There'd never been a song like this before,  
heaven's music proclaimed the birth of Christ, the Lord.  
There'd never been a night, a night like this before.

"Do not be afraid," the angel said to them,  
"you will find the baby down in Bethlehem.  
He's in a manger bed, such a humble birth,  
the King of kings has come down to earth."

The shepherds rejoiced and began to run  
to the new born King, God's holy Son.  
There'd never been a night like this before!

There'd never been a night like this before!  
There'd never been a night like this before  
with the angels around singin' praise to the Lord.  
The glory of the lord was revealed that night!  
There'd never been a song like this before,  
heaven's music proclaimed the birth of Christ, the Lord.  
There'd never been a night, a night like this before.

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.  
Never been a night, a night like this before.  
Never been a song, a song like this before.  
Never been a night, a night like this before.  
Never been a night like this!

**SCRIPTURE** - Luke 2:15-20 (Miranda Hunter)

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." <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**INTERLUDE** *O Savior Sweet*  
Bob Oehme, organ

J.S. Bach  
arranged by Brown

**POEM**

*I Will Light Candles This Christmas*  
from *The Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations*

by Howard Thurman

I will light Candles this Christmas,  
Candles of joy despite all the sadness,  
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,  
Candles of courage for the fears ever present,  
Candles of peace for the tempest-tossed days,  
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,  
Candles of love to inspire all my living,  
Candles that will burn all year long.

**SERMON** (Pastor John)

**BRINGING CHRIST'S LIGHT INTO THE WORLD**

**LIGHTING THE CHRISTMAS CANDLES**

**\*HYMN** *Silent Night* #134 (v. 1 in German, 2-4 in English)  
Elspeth Hunter, soloist  
Allyssa Jutting, violin

Joseph Mohr, 1818,  
transl. John F. Young 1863  
Tune: STILLE NACHT by Franz Gruber, 1818

**BENEDICTION** (Pastor John)

*The Work of Christmas* by Howard Thurman  
from *The Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations*

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
when the star in the sky is gone,  
when the kings and princes are home,  
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,

the work of Christmas begins:  
to find the lost,  
to heal the broken,  
to feed the hungry,  
to release the prisoner,  
to rebuild the nations,  
to bring peace among the people,  
to make music in the heart.

**POSTLUDE** Glory to the Newborn King

Words and Music by LLOYD LARSON

Quoting *On Christmas Night All Christians Sing* (SUSSEX CAROL), Traditional English Carol;  
*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* (MENDELSSOHN) by Charles Wesley and Felix Mendelssohn  
and *Were You There on That Christmas Night?* By Natalie Sleeth.

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Sing Gloria in excelsis Deo!  
Gloria in excelsis Deo! Glory be to God on high!

On Christmas night all Christians sing  
to hear the news the angels bring:  
On Christmas night all Christians sing  
to hear the news the angels bring:  
news of great joy, news of great mirth,  
news of our merciful King's birth.

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King.  
"Peace on earth and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!"

All out of darkness we have light,  
which made the angels sing this night:  
Glory to God and peace on earth!

Joyful all ye nations rise; join the triumph of the skies;  
with th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."

Hail the heav'n born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings, ris'n 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.  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."

Did you hear how the choirs of angels sang at the glory of the sight?  
Did you hear how the bells of heaven rang all through the night?  
Were you there, were you there on that Christmas night,  
when the world was filled with the holy light?  
Were, you there to behold when the wonder foretold came to earth?

Sing Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!  
Glory be to God on high! Amen!