



ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

CHRISTMAS EVE: WE BRING OUR GIFTS TO GOD

www.zionuccindy.net/worshipathome

Christmas Eve
December 24, 2021

Gathering Music Bell Choir and Organ

Bells of Christmas/O Come, Emmanuel

Welcome

Prelude

Away in a Manger

We are Called to Worship—After a long season of waiting and preparing this Advent, the time has come for us to celebrate the birth of our Savior—to hear the ancient promises of our holy scriptures, to sing out the melody of our carols, to gather united as the body of Christ, and to share the light of Christ with the world. On this sacred night, we remember Jesus Christ, born long ago in Bethlehem, God's love incarnate, God-with-Us, Emmanuel, Prince of Peace, Savior of the world. We give thanks for the gift of Life we know in Christ Jesus, and in return we bring the gift of our hearts—our whole lives, all that we are—in gratitude and praise.

Lighting Our Advent Wreath

The Gift of Life

Reader 1: Hear these prophetic words
for Isaiah 9:

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.

Reader 2:

⁶ For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, 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 onwards and for
evermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do
this.

Reader 3: The Arriving One alleviates our despair and offers us new possibilities for the fullness of life.

Reader 4: We are hopeful and excited!

Reader 3: The Arriving One quiets our distractions and calls us into new actions.

Reader 4: We are peace-seeking and prepared!

Reader 3: The Arriving One dispels our insecurities and directs us to new depths.

Reader 4: We are joy-filled and eager!

Reader 3: The Arriving One embraces our fullness and guides us toward new living.

Reader 4: We are love-ready and empowered!

Reader 3: The Arriving One repurposes our pain and invites us into new purpose.

Reader 4: We are excited, prepared, eager, and empowered!

(Reader 1 or 2 lights the Christ candle)

Reader 3: Good news, great joy, all the people!

Reader 4: We are here and whole!=

Carol with Bell Choir

Angels from the Realms of Glory, #189

A Christmas Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (unison)—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.

Choir

Have You Heard? with soloist Shae Murphy

We Hear God's Word

Luke 2:1-20 (NRSV)

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

⁸In 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 Saviour, 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 favours!’

¹⁵When 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.

Meditation

The Gift of Our Hearts

Choir

O Holy Night, with soloist Karie Hon

We Respond to God's Word with Our Giving

Invitation— Glory to God in the highest heaven! God brings peace, good news, and great joy! What do you have to offer back?+ Tonight, we bring not

only the gift of our resources but the gift of our hearts—our very lives, our time, our talents, our service, our courage, our creativity, our praise. All that we are we dedicate to God on this holy night so that we might say thank you God for the gift of life in Jesus Christ.

December Benevolence— The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need

You can mail your offerings to our office or give online at www.zionuccindy.net/donate.

A Doxology for Advent *By Rev. Scott Cervas, to the tune of Greensleeves*
These gifts we joyfully bring to you,
to fill the world with meaning;
our hearts and minds are longing for
the life of which you are dreaming.
This, this our gift we bring,
our lives we share, your praise we sing;
show us your vision, Lord,
for hope, and peace, and caring.

We Give Thanks— God of peace and joy, you bind us together as if in swaddling bands of our own cloth. We are meant to be together, meant to be active participants in your great story, the story of humanity’s redemption. We give these gifts with open eyes that can see, if for but a moment, strands of linen gently guiding us all toward one another. Amen.+

We Share the Light of Christ

Special Music *Angels in the Bleak Midwinter*, Collin Bennington, Violin

Hymn

Silent Night, #186

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.

We Are Sent Forth with a Blessing— Go forth and shine light in the darkness. Go and bring peace into our troubled world. Proclaim hope in the midst of despair. Go with God's blessings— for a child has been born to us, who is Love for the nations and Light for the world. Amen.~

Postlude

Christmas Joy Chimes