

St. John's United Church of Christ

Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

7 P.M. Worship December 24, 2023
CHRISTMAS EVE

WE GET READY FOR THE WORD

Prayer of Preparation *Christmas Eve Prayer*

O God, who spoke all creation into being: When you created human flesh, we betrayed you by our disobedience. When you led us out of slavery in Egypt, we doubted and defied you. Yet you chose to come among us through your Son, Jesus Christ. For this great gift of your steadfast hope, we give you thanks. Help us, O Lord, to keep vigil this night. Help us to watch for the signs of your coming into our midst, not in the splendid palaces of power, but in hearts humbled by need. Help us to believe that the darkness of cruelty and sin will never overcome the light, and the mercy, of Christ. Help us to endure, knowing that the evil and injustice of this world cannot prevail against your Word. We ask this in the name of your Word made flesh, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prelude

"African Angel Carol"

arr. Curry

Greeting

Proclamation

Carol:	<i>"Christians All, Your Lord is Coming"</i>	#136 verses 1 and 4
Christians all your Lord is coming Drawing near in holy birth Ring the bells and sound the trumpets Let your music fill the earth Dance and move to show God's glory Kneel and pause to hear God's word Alleluia Alleluia Rise and let your songs be heard	Christians all your Lord is coming Hope for peace is now at hand Let there be no hesitation Walk in faith where life demands Bear the word that God has given Share the birth that stirs your soul Alleluia Alleluia Christ will come and make you whole	

CELEBRATING THE LIGHT OF ADVENT

The Nichols Family

*Hymn	<i>"One Candle is Lit"</i>	#128
	Come surely Lord Jesus, as dawn follows night, A candle for hope and for peace burning bright, A candle for love and for joy bright with light. One candle is lit for the Christ born this night.	

***Call to Worship**

One: Listen! Do you hear the sounds of joy?

Have you heard the messenger's good news?

**ALL: The Word was with God from the beginning.
in Jesus, the Word has come to dwell among us.**

One: Break forth into singing, people of God!

Your comfort and your salvation are at hand.

**ALL: In Christ, we are empowered as God's children.
We are gifted with grace and truth.**

One: Sing a new song and marvel at God's ways.

Make a joyful noise through all the earth.

**ALL: We celebrate the true light that enlightens us.
We rejoice in the gift of new life.**

***Carol:**

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

#155 v1 & 2

Angels we have heard on high
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply
echoing their joyous strains.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be,
Which inspire your heavenly song?

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

*** Opening Prayer (*In Unison*)**

Speak to us again, God of glory, for we are slow to hear. Remind us of the good news, for we are prone to forget. Take us to see Jesus, for we have lost our way. We are weary and worn. We cry out for the truth that is eternal. O God, grant us the joy of your presence and the assurance of your steadfast love. Let all creation join together in praise; let the hills sing together in celebration of the Word made flesh. Amen.

Carol:

"It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"

#153 v1 & 4

It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold;
"Peace on the earth, good will to all
from heaven's all-gracious King!"
The world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing.

For lo, the days are hastening on,
by prophet seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years,
shall come the time foretold;
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world send back the song
which now the angels sing.

The Old Testament Lesson Isaiah 52:7-10

Carol:

"Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

#150 v1 & 2

Hark! the herald-angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King;
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."
Hark, the herald-angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come,
offspring of a Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail the incarnate Deity,
pleased in flesh with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark, the herald-angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!"

The Epistle Lesson

Hebrews 1:1-12

Carol:

"Angels, from the Realms of Glory"

#149 verse 1 & 4

Angels, from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
you who sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth:

Refrain:

Come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the new-born King.

Saints before the altar bending,
watching long in hope and fear,
suddenly the Lord, descending,
here among us shall appear:

Refrain:

Come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the new-born King.

The Gospel Lesson

John 1:1-14

Prayer: *(In Unison)*

Child of Bethlehem, lover of humanity, our crucified and risen Savior grant that we may know the Word that gives light and life. Shine through us with joyous testimony to your truth so the way we live will make your love known to all we meet. Link us with one another as your beloved children who respond to your glory with gracious and truthful living. Amen.

Special Music

"A Hallelujah Christmas"

The Christmas Story

Luke 2:1-20

One: In those days a decree went out. . . .

Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them,

ALL: 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.'

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

ALL: 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!'

Message

Special Music

"O Holy Night"

SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation

One: Lift up your hearts and voices,

All: For this is a holy night.

One: Let the children stay up late

All: For this is a holy night.

One: Light many candles and hold them high

All: For this is a holy night.

One: Listen for the flutter of angel wings

All: On this most holy night.

One: Open your hearts to the lost and poor

All: On this most holy night.

One: Wipe away every tear

All: On this most holy night.

One: Open your eyes to the starry sky

All: On this most holy night.

One: Ready your heart for the child of God

All: Coming on this most holy night.

Prayer:

ONE: Eternal God, who has created the heavens and the earth, giving breath to every living thing, we thank you for all the gifts of creation and for the gift of life itself.

ALL: **We thank you for making us in your own image, for forgiving us when we act as though you have no claim on us, and for keeping us in your steadfast care.**

ONE: We rejoice in Jesus Christ, the only one eternally begotten by you, who was born of your servant Mary and shared the joys and sorrows of life as we know it.

ALL: **We remember Christ's death, we celebrate Christ's resurrection, and, in the beloved community of your church, we await Christ's return at the end of history.**

One: We take courage from the abiding presence of your Holy Spirit in our midst.

ALL: **We offer you our praise for women and men of faith in every age who stand as witnesses to your love and justice.**

ONE: With all the prophets and saints, and all the company of heaven, we glorify you:

ALL: **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!**

The Lord's Prayer (In 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.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen

Carol:*"I Wonder as I Wander"***#161**

**I wonder as I wander, out under the sky,
how Jesus the Savior did come for to die
for poor ordinary people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky.**

**When Mary birthed Jesus, 'twas in a cow's stall
with wise men and farmers and shepherd and all.
but high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,
and the promise of ages it did then recall.**

**If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing,
a star in the sky, or a bird on the wing,
or all of God's angels in heaven for to sing,
he surely could have it, 'cause he was the King.**

**I wonder as I wander, out under the sky,
how Jesus the Savior did come for to die
for poor ordinary people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky.**

Words of Institution**Receiving of the Elements**

***Prayer of Thanksgiving** (*In Unison*)

Holy God, we thank you for Christmas joy - for gifts and family gatherings, for renewed friendships and splendid meals. We give you thanks for this communion meal we just received. We thank you for this community, which lights candles, sings carols and puts faith into action. We thank you for hope kindled, peace restored and visions of a new world. God of Christmas blessings, we thank you. Amen.

THE SERVICE OF LIGHTS

*Carol:	" <i>Silent Night</i> "	#145
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. 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.	
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, wondrous star, lend thy light; with the angels let us sing, alleluia to our King; Christ, the Savior, is born, Christ, the Savior, is born.	

Benediction

Postlude

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Preaching: **Pastor Lisa Hart**
Director of Music: Ministry: **Ruth Notch**
Advent Candle: **The Nichols Family**
Vocalist: **Meher Arora**
Technology: **Steve Hawkinson**

Poinsettias Given to the Glory of God in ...

In Memory of my husband, David Golland, given by Barbara Golland.

In Honor of my family, Sharon, Erick, Ava & Drew Bauman
given by Barbara Golland.

In Memory of Frank and Wilma Stortz given by Helen Stortz and Richard Camp.

In Memory of George and Florence Camp
given by Helen Stortz and Richard Camp.

In Celebration of the season given by Helen Stortz and Richard Camp.

In Memory of George Tindira given by Carol, John & Matt Tindira.

In Memory of Roy and Irene Aldrich given by Lee and Phil Difani.

In Memory of Phil Difani, Sr. given by Lee and Phil Difani.

In Memory of Leonard J. and Laverne Haas
given by Charles and Marjorie Neubert.

In Honor of our children Diana and Jason Flower and Andrea and Chris Vinyard
given by Carolyn and Byron Golfen.

In Memory of Raymond and Ruth Sontag
given by Larry, Angie & Corryne Sontag.

In Memory of George and Lynn Hudson given by Larry, Angie & Corryne Sontag.

In Memory of our relatives and church members and many friends
taken into God's care given by Larry, Angie & Corryne Sontag.

In Memory of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Hart given by Monica Hart & Brian Spahr.

In Memory of Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Spahr. given by Monica Hart & Brian Spahr.

In Memory of my loving husband Harold given by Phyllis Freiberger.

In Celebration of my wonderful family given by Phyllis Freiberger.

In Honor of Rev Carl and Maryilyn Norton given by Phyllis Freiberger.

In Honor of our family given by Ken & Jackie Ruff.

In Celebration of a Merry Christmas given by The Pisoni Family.

With thanks to Pastor Lisa given by The Pisoni Family.

In Honor of my parents, Wesley & Arland Stemme given by Warren Stemme.

In Honor of my sons, Ryan & Kyle Stemme given by Warren Stemme.

In Celebration of the congregation of St. John's UCC Chesterfield
given by Warren Stemme.

In Honor of our mothers Leitha Macalady & Angelina Amato
given by Charlie & Nora Amato.

In Memory of our fathers Francis Macalady Sr. & Jim Amato
given by Charlie & Nora Amato.

In Celebration of our family & friends given by Charlie, Nora & Anthony Amato.

In Memory of Dorothy and Roy Steiner given by Janis Boehm.

In Memory of Pearl and George Hill given by Janis Boehm.

In Celebration of our church family given by Janis Boehm.