

ST. JOHN
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

DECEMBER 24, 2017 7 pm
CHRISTMAS EVE
SERVICE OF WORD AND SACRAMENT



**An Open and Affirming congregation
where all are welcome**

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Please respond with words in **bold** print.

*Please stand if comfortably able

WORDS OF WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE:

THE BELLS CALL US INTO SILENT REVERENCE.
THE CANDLES ARE LIT TO LIGHT OUR WAY INTO
WORSHIP.

PRELUDE: Flute Duet – **“O Little Town of Bethlehem”**
Stacie Pickens and Shannon Banjavcic

*RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:

One: With eyes wide open and our ears on edge,

**MANY: we look for shepherds
and listen for the songs of angels.**

One: In the light of winter’s moon,
with candles lighting the way,

**MANY: we gather outside the door of a mystery,
wondering if we dare go enter.**

One: With folks and friends we love,
with strangers we have just met,

**MANY: we gather, becoming a holy family
for this time and in this place.**

*OPENING HYMN: **“O Come All Ye Faithful”** (on screen)

*INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

This is the night we are reminded that God loves to be with us. Yet all too often – by our choices, our words, our silence – we choose not to be with Go. Join me as we pray on this holy night to the One who was born to gift us with mercy and hope.

***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

This was going to be the year, God of silent nights, when we were going to give away more than we spent, but we didn't. This was going to be the season when we spent more time with others, but we filled our calendars with meetings. This was going to be the Christmas when we wrote personal letters to friends and family, but spent too much energy filling out our to-do lists. This was going to be a truly holy season, but it just got to harried and hurried.

Forgive us, Love Gifter, and draw us closer to the Baby born not into wealth and power, but into poverty and weakness; to the One who loves unconditionally and welcomes all; to the Child who gathers other children to him, to bless them and serve them; to the One who drew near to us, so we might be drawn to your heart – Jesus Christ, our Brother, our Lord.

Silent personal confession

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON:**

Into the valleys of our death, Jesus comes with life;
into the shadows of our world, Jesus brings light;
into the brokenness of our lives, Jesus brings forgiveness and peace.

Thanks be to God for the gift of the Baby of Bethlehem, who brings joy and peace to us in these moments of forgiveness and in all the days to come. Amen.

***GLORIA: #759**

**Glory to the Creator, the Christ, the Holy Spirit,
Three-in-One; As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.**

CHOIR ANTHEM: “Mary, Did You Know?” M. Lowry

FIRST TESTAMENT READING: **Isaiah 9:2-7**
Lay Liturgist (Pages 844 in the Pew Bible)

GOSPEL LESSON: **Luke 2:1-20*
Pastor Rosemary (Pages 1245- 1246 in the Pew Bible)
Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

SERMON: “Christmas Yes”

***HYMN OF RESPONSE: “It Came upon the Midnight Clear”**
(words on the screen)

PASTORAL PRAYER:

THE LORD’S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed it be your 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.

PRAYER RESPONSE: CHOIR – “All Is Well” M. Smith

SERVICE OF SHARING:

OFFERTORY: PIANO/ORGAN DUET: – “Away in a Manger”
Stacie Pickens and Sharon Banjavcic

***DOXOLOGY: # 780**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION:**

Now, on this night of giftedness, remind us of those who struggle to put food on the table, to buy a single gift for their child, to wrap a warm blanket around a grandparent, so we might realize how blessed we are and share from our abundance. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

***HOLY COMMUNION:** (written by Thom M. Schuman)
(on screen)

May the God of silent nights be with you!

May the God of herald angels be with you!

Open your hearts to the One born in the little town of Bethlehem.

May Emmanuel come to abide in our hearts.

Join all believers in singing of our joy this night.

May our voices blend with those of the angels and shepherds.

***LET US PRAY:** You crept into chaos . . .

As we gather with children dressed in their fineness,
as we join with the voices around us,
we proclaim praises to you this Christmas night:

**We will not be afraid,
for great joy is ours this night;
we will look for the signs of your presence,
grace swaddled in hope,
love wrapped around broken hearts.
Glory to you, God in the highest heavens!
May peace fill the lives of all your children!
(be seated)**

Leaving your side . . .

On this night, when we sing of the baby in the manger, as the shadow of the cross is cast by the stars, we proclaim that mystery called incarnation:

**Christ is our light,
and we will join the angels in singing the good news;
Christ is our life,
and we will join the disciples in telling the Story;
Christ is our promise,
and we wait for the joy of his return.**

Here in the silence . . .

The bread broken. The wine poured.
Come for all things are ready.

SHARING THE ELEMENTS:

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:**

Thank you, God, for renewing us at your table of joy and wonder with the presence of your Son, born so long ago, to live and die and rise for us all. Thank you for your eternal love, the bread of life, that sustains all creation. Help us continue as your servants in this world, wherever we reside. Amen.

***LIGHTING OF CANDLES: "Silent Night"**

The choir will sing the first verse. The congregation the second and third verse, followed by all of us humming a last verse.

*SENDING:

Let us go to be the gift another needs,
**sharing God's blessings of love and grace,
running to tell the Story we heard from the shepherds.**

Let us go to be the comfort which can swaddle others,
**sharing Jesus' compassion with the poor and needy,
welcoming the holiness offered by the most vulnerable we
meet.**

Let us go to enkindle the lives around us,
**sharing the Spirit's peace with all the broken,
learning the language of hope from the children in our
midst.**

*BENEDICTION RESPONSE:

"Angels We Have Heard On High" (verse 3)

Come to Bethlehem and see

Christ whose birth the angels sing.

Come adore on bended knee,

God, our world now entering.

Glo-ria n excelsis Deo. Glo-ria in excelsis Deo.

AS WE GO OUT INTO THE WORLD, THE BELLS RING THE
GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST'S BIRTH.

*POSTLUDE: **"Joyful Tidings" James Moffatt**

TO BE CONTINUED. . .

*Merry Christmas to you and yours
from St. John UCC*