



CHRISTMAS EVE

Family Service with Parish Drive ~ December 24, 2023

*As we joyfully greet each other today and share the gifts of friendship and love,
you are invited to begin your personal preparation for worship
at the beginning of the gathering music.*

Your Christmas Offering:

Come now and kneel before the Christ child.
Bring all that you are and all that you have.
Offer your gifts in wonder and surprise and awe.
Offer your gifts in joy and delight.

Heavenly Father, we celebrate the birth of the Holy Child! Although born in humble surroundings, Jesus' presence surrounds all who call upon his name. The hope born in a manger long ago is birthed again. We gratefully offer our financial gifts as a way to provide hope for all God's children. We rejoice in knowing that Your ministry is strengthened by our gifts and prayers. We pray in the name of the Babe born in the manger. Amen.

We invite you, at the beginning or closing of the service, to place your Christmas Offering in the gold plates located in the back of the Sanctuary.

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

All through Advent the children have been building a house for the Lord. They began by laying the foundation: Hope – hoping that the Christ child would come. Then they built walls of Peace – for the Prince of Peace. Then on top of peace – Joy! For that is deep down in our hearts. And finally, this morning, they crowned the house with Love – for out of love for us God has sent his only Son, Jesus the Christ. Tonight, we gather at the house to open the Door of Welcome for the Christ Child to enter into our church, our hearts, and our lives.

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Leader: Rejoice, for God is with us -- Emmanuel.

All: In the darkness of our world shines God's holy light.

Leader: Now there is reason to hope, to love, to laugh, to live.

All: God is truly with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God!

THE LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Hope is assertive, peace is subversive, joy is provocative, and love is transformative. God tore open the heavens as hope became alive in us with the cry of the newborn babe. The heavenly host, the army of God, showed up and instead of declaring war, said “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, goodwill to all.” Joy was shared by parents and visitors in the midst of an empirical census and under the rule of an insecure puppet king. And love—love from God, love for one another—the Christ-child taught us that the greatest love is to lay down one’s lives for one another, to set aside the things of this world that would tear us apart and instead look to what draws us together. This is the kind of love that still transforms the world when we share it. On this night, we light the Christ-candle, a reminder that hope, peace, joy, and love are not merely words for this season of the year, but promises of God that are alive in us for eternity, and that God’s steadfast love endures forever.

Light the Christ Candle

All: O come to us, abide in us, our Lord, Emmanuel. God with us, make Your presence known to us, now and always. Shine bright in the shadows and despair, and may the warmth of Your love carry us forward. You changed the world forever that night long ago when You were born, and You are changing

our lives, right now. On this Christmas Eve, we pray for Your transformative love to be renewed, for our own hope, peace, joy and love to be restored. We ask for Your guidance in helping each of us live into Your reign on earth as it is in heaven, for Your reign is at hand, and it is coming. Lead us into ways of participating in Your reign now by doing justice, practicing compassionate love and kindness, and walking humbly with You, our Savior and Redeemer, the Living God, Jesus Christ. Amen.

*** HYMN**

Emmanuel, Emmanuel

UMH# 204

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

With joy and thanksgiving, we gather as your people.

We have come to hear again the timeless story of Christ's birth.

In the excitement of this night, quiet our hearts

that we may know the peace and fullness of this holy time.

Shine, O Light, in the darkness of our world.

Sing, O angels, in the stillness of our hearts,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those God favors."

This we pray in the name of the Child of Bethlehem. Amen.

THE PROPHECY Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

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. 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. 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.

SONG

Winter Snow

Rachel Fikslin with Parish Drive

THE STORY OF THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

Luke 2: 1-7

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

HYMN

O Little Town of Bethlehem

UMH #230

Luke 2: 8-20 Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.

When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

RECEIVING AND SHARING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

Christ, the Light of the world, gives each one of us light, so that we too may shine with gratitude, hope, and love. Receive the light that comes to you: it comes from the Christ candle, but it reaches you only through your neighbors. Receive the light from a brother or sister in Christ.

Hold the light, enjoy the light, and be thankful.

SILENT NIGHT

**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!**

**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

As you go out into the world this night...
May God's Door of Welcome
swing open in your heart and in your life.
May Christ's humble first dwelling
remind you of the plenty you already know.
And may the Spirit lead you into
more possibility and hospitality than you can imagine,
making room for all.
Go in peace. Merry Christmas. Amen.

GOING FORTH MUSIC *Joy to the World (Unspeakable Joy)*



*We wish you a Christmas full of hope,
steeped in joy,
abounding in peace,
and overflowing with love!*

***Thank you for financially supporting our ministry.
We offer many ways to give:***

In the sanctuary or by mail.

Online at www.umcwayne.org

<https://giving.ncsservices.org/app/giving/umcwgiving>

Text "GIVING" to 973-447-3223

QR Code:



UPCOMING EVENTS

Our office will be closed this week.

If you need assistance, please call Pastor Ninabeth at 908-391-2561.

Sunday December 31st – Watch Night Worship at 10am



***“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 flock,
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 others,
to make music in the heart.”***

~ Howard Thurman

UMC Wayne Ministers
All the members of UMC in Wayne
Pastor Ninabeth Metcalf
Email: PastorNinabeth@umcwayne.org Cell: 908-391-2561
Don Matthews – Lay Leader
Peter Candela – Music Director
email: peter@umcwayne.org
David Philp – Parish Drive Director
Nicole Force – Admin. Assistant Email: office@umcwayne.org