



*The United Methodist Church in Wayne
Christmas Eve
7pm 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.*

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: God of grace and truth, we have come to witness a miracle;

All: full of mystery, awe and wonder.

Leader: We have come to open our hearts;

All: to receive the Christ child once more.

Leader: And in this sacred moment we ask for your Gentle Presence to captivate and challenge us;

All: As we join with all creation in celebrating Emmanuel; God-With-Us!

HYMN

O Come All Ye Faithful *verses 1-3*

UMH #234

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.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, with joy and thanksgiving we gather as your people. We have come to hear again the timeless story of Christ's birth. 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.

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Jubilation Ringers

THE PROPHECY OF THE MESSIAH

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.

HYMN

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

UMH #218

THE COMING OF JESUS IS ANNOUNCED TO MARY AND JOSEPH

Luke 1:26-38, Matthew 1:18-24

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings,

avored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.”

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife.

HYMN

To a Maid Engaged to Joseph

UMH #215

THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Luke 2:1- 5

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.

JESUS IS BORN

Luke 2:6-7

While they [Mary & Joseph] 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

Away In a Manger

UMH #217

JESUS' BIRTH IS ANNOUNCED TO THE SHEPHERDS

Luke 2:8-14

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 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, "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."

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

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

HYMN

Angels We Have Heard On High

UMH #238

THE SHEPHERD FIND THE BABY JESUS

Luke 2:15-18

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." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

THE WISE MEN BRING THEIR GIFTS TO JESUS***Matthew 2:1-11***

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

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. There are so many things to be thankful for tonight,

All: On a night when all seems holy, we praise your name, O God. We thank you for the gifts of hope, love, joy, and peace that are embodied in this night.

As we celebrate the coming of Jesus, we offer you these financial gifts as an expression of our love and faith. In the name of the Prince of Peace, we pray, Amen.

At the close of the service, as you leave, we invite you to place your Christmas Offering in the gold plates located in the back of the Sanctuary.

WITNESS TO THE LIGHT

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

HYMN

Silent Night

We invite you to raise your candle high for the Benediction

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

May the light that enlivens all the world, the light that darkness cannot overcome, love's pure light in Jesus Christ, shine on you and in our world this day.

POSTLUDE

Joy to the World

*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