



O Come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord!

Tuesday, December 24, 2024 4:00PM

## Open Manger

On this wondrous day what a blessing it is to gather as *The Church of the Open Door* to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child. We are so blessed that you have joined us today, that you have chosen to come worship here and receive today's message of hope. Your presence is truly a Christmas gift, just as you are a treasured child created in wonder by our loving God. In the Gospel of Luke, we read:

*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. -Luke 2:15-16*

We have come with haste today to "see this thing that has taken place." On Christmas we remember and re-live the powerful moment when God became flesh born in an animal trough in a manger. What took place has changed everything; all of our past, our present, and our future now parallel to our God-in-human-flesh story of loving renewal and redemption. All the animal smells, the chaos of delivering a baby among them, the sounds of the rawness of human birth: it testifies to God's conviction and willing sacrifice to become our Immanuel. Oh, how God longs for us to worship and adore this thing that has taken place! How God wants for us to be transformed on this holy day!

Christmas is a breach between the divine and mortal. It is a gathering of those of us who choose a peculiar way to live, often in the margins. Today is a door for those without hope. Today with verse and lyric, candles and props, we carefully unwrapped God's Word which holds an unquenchable joy. Our prayer for you is that you would receive God's gift: that the open manger would become an untying of divine purpose and love, joy and hope. Likewise, our prayer for *The Church of the Open Door* is that we continue to be an inclusive, scripturally faithful and joy-filled people in all our ministries, fellowship, and worship.

If you are traveling, we wish you safe travels. If you are visiting, we want to invite you to fill out a Connection Card so we can warmly welcome you and share more about our community. Lastly, for many of us the holidays hold remembrances and grief, and we invite you to fill out a Prayer Request so we can hold you in prayer. May God's gift of the Christ child, whose love is open to all of creation, bless you this day and forevermore.

Merry Christmas!

Pastors Nick and Katherine



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

December 24, 2024

4:00PM

Christmas Eve Pageant & Family Nativity Worship

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### PRELUDE

*Music for Christmas*

Various

Dr. Nathan Birkholz, *piano*

*Appalachian Carol (I Wonder as I Wander)*

Setting by Molly Ijames

Dr. Nathan Birkholz, *piano*    Andrew Schmidt, *euphonium*

### WELCOME

*\*Please Rise in Body or Spirit*

#### \*CALL TO WORSHIP

Elise Burton and Joanna Schmidt

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

**All: We wait for Mary and Joseph,  
we watch with the shepherds,  
we listen for the songs of angels,  
we search for the star that lit the way for the wise.**

One: Tonight, we gather before a mystery,  
wondering if we dare enter.

**All: With family and friends we love,  
with strangers we have just met,  
we gather to welcome the Christ child.**

One: Let us worship God!

### OPENING CAROL #132

*O Come, All Ye Faithful*

ADESTE FIDELES

**1. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
come and behold him, born the King of angels;**

**Chorus: O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ, the Lord!**

2. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest; *Chorus*
3. Child for us sinners poor and in the manger,  
we would embrace thee with love and awe;  
who would not love thee, loving us so dearly? *Chorus*
4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning,  
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;  
Word of the Eternal, now in flesh appearing; *Chorus*

#### CANDLE LIGHTING LITURGY

The Wilterdink family

One: We come to celebrate the light of hope. Hope in the promises of God;  
hope in the way of Jesus; hope in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**All: Hope for each of us and hope for all of us.**

One: We come to celebrate the light of peace. Peace as we trust God's power;  
peace as we follow Jesus; peace as we know the Spirit's presence.

**All: Peace within our hearts and peace throughout our world.**

One: We come to celebrate the light of joy. Joy in our relationship with God;  
joy in our walk with Jesus, joy in the fullness of the Spirit.

**All: Joy deep within us—in times of happiness and sorrow.**

One: We come to celebrate the light of love. Love because God loved us first;  
love because Jesus was born in Bethlehem; love because the Spirit is with us.

**All: Love within us and among us.**

One: We come to receive the light of Jesus as we celebrate his birth.

**All: We receive this light that illuminates the holy path of hope, peace,  
love, and joy.**

#### CHILDREN'S CHOIR SONGS

*He Came Down*

Trad. from the Cameroons

*Jesus, Jesus, Rest Your Head*

John Jacob Niles

*O Come, Little Children*

arr. Patterson

Children's Choir

#### READING FROM THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Ara Gingerich

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.

#### CAROL #150

*Away in a Manger*

AWAY IN A MANGER

1. **Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head  
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,  
the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.**
2. **The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,  
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.  
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,  
and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.**
3. **Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay  
close by me forever, and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,  
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.**

#### SECOND READING FROM THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Will Clothier

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!" 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. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY/MUSICAL REFLECTION

*Ding Dong! Merrily on High!*

16 c. French Tune  
Setting by Molly Ijames

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Easton Piepenburg

One: Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

One: Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world.

Shine in the dark places

Where there are wars

And where people hurt each other.

Lord, in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

One: Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world.

Help our leaders

To know how to govern

So that everybody's needs are met,

Especially those who are suffering.

Lord, in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

One: Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world.

Shine in the dark places

Where people are ill or sad.

Please bring help and healing,

Especially to children.

Lord, in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

One: Lord Jesus, we are your lights in the world.

Help us to be prepared

To look out for you

And listen for you

So we can follow you in everything we do.

Lord, in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

## **A MARY CAROL - ORIGINAL SKIT**

Gabriel: Cameron Gabbey      Mary: Mya Ballerstein

Isaiah: Dave Frederick

Joseph: Henry Clothier

Child Mary: Winry Brahe

### **NATIVITY SCENE**

*All children present are welcome to participate.*

#### **CAROL #135**

*Angels We Have Heard on High*

GLORIA

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

**Gloria in excelsis Deo!**

**Gloria in excelsis Deo!**

2. **Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
Say what may the tidings be,  
which inspire your heavenly song.**

**Gloria in excelsis Deo!**

**Gloria in excelsis Deo!**

#### **CAROL #153**

*What Child Is This, Who, Laid to Rest*

GREENSLEEVES

1. **What child is this, who, laid to rest,  
on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,  
while shepherds watch are keeping?**

**Refrain: This, this is Christ the King,  
whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring Him praise,  
the babe, the son of Mary.**

2. **Why lies the child in manger bare  
where ox and ass are feeding?  
Give heed, draw near, for sinners here  
the silent Word is pleading. *Refrain.***

3. So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh,  
come, rich and poor, to own him;  
the King of kings salvation brings,  
let loving hearts enthrone him. *Refrain*

\*AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH FOR CHRISTMAS (in unison)

Evan Gabbey

We believe that for generations  
people have gathered together  
on this holy night,  
because there is something about this story  
that speaks to the deepest parts of us.  
We believe in passing this good news along  
to our friends, to our neighbors,  
to the world around us.  
We believe our voices can make a difference,  
just like we believe this story can make a difference,  
We will tell this story of a love that makes room for all.  
We will sing this story of a love that knows our names.  
We will live this story because love has come again.  
God is with us in Jesus Christ, tonight and always.  
Amen.

CAROL #142

*Silent Night, Holy Night*

STILLE NACHT

1. 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.
2. 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!
3. 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.

## CLOSING CHARGE & BENEDICTION

### CAROL #134

*Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come*

ANTIOCH

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come:  
let earth receive her King;  
let every heart prepare him room,  
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.
2. Joy to the world! the Savior reigns:  
let earth her songs employ;  
let fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
3. Christ rules the world with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness,  
and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.

### POSTLUDE

*In dulci jubilo, BWV 729 (In Sweet Rejoicing)*

J. S. Bach

### THANK YOU TO TODAY'S WORSHIP LEADERS

Pastor Nicholas J. Hatch, *Co-Pastor*

Pastor Katherine Willis Pershey, *Co-Pastor*

Sarah Wilterdink, *Director of Children, Youth & Family Ministries*

Renae Salvia, *Associate Director of Director of Children, Youth & Family Ministries*

Dr. Nathan Birkholz, *Organist*

Andrew Schmidt, *euphonium*

Children's Choir

John M. Albrecht, *Director for Music Ministries*

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O Come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord!

*Stop by the chapel to view the beautiful nativity set donated to First Congregational. The classic scene, arranged on the communion table, reminds us of Christ's humble birth in a manger. We've placed a Bible beside the nativity and encourage you to read Luke 2:1-20 as you contemplate the miracle of the Incarnation.*

**The church office will be closed from Tuesday, December 24 through Wednesday, January 1, 2025, and reopen Thursday, January 2, 2025.  
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**

**To receive a tax credit on church donations for the 2024 year, all contributions must be postmarked by or received in the church office by Tuesday, December 31.**

#### **USHERS/AUDIO/VIDEO**

TODAY'S USHERS: Sandra Hurm, Ron Hurm, Kevin Gentile

JANUARY USHERS: Team 4

AUDIO & VIDEO: Matt Feuerhelm

#### **WORSHIP SCHEDULE FOR NEXT SUNDAY**

*"The Boy Jesus in Song and in Person"* Pastor Nick Hatch  
Congregational Hymn Sing Noah Harmon, guest pianist Luke 2:41-52  
**No Childcare/ No CYF**

**We are "The Church of the Open Door," a welcoming and inclusive Christian community.  
No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.**



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For pastoral emergencies: 920.810.2600



## 2024 Holiday Decoration Gifts

In memory of Rev. Harvey Kandler ~ By his family

In memory of Bill & Jan Dougherty and Thomas & Helen Giese  
~ Mark & Lori Dougherty

In memory of Joan's parents, Carlton & Arlene Beyer and  
Steve's mom, Joan Hawkins ~ Joan & Steve Hawkins

In memory of my husband, Paul J. Siket ~ Chris Calhoun

In memory of and in celebration of Alicia Rose Arndt Dorn,  
for what would have been her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday ~ Anne Brahe, her BFF

In memory of Adele & John Bowman and Elmer & Marion Gosse ~ Karen & Dick Gosse

In memory of my brother, John Varner ~ Faye Binsfeld

In memory of Jim & Evelyn Vercouteren ~ Beth Vercouteren

In memory of Charles Eggenberger ~ Jill Anthony

In memory of Ginger Uehling ~ Barb Uehling

In celebration of our church staff and council ~ Cheryl & Ron Reissmann