

**ORDER OF WORSHIP**  
**"The Festival of Christmas Eve"**

**December 24, 2020**

**4 o'clock in the evening**

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.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'

Luke 1:30-34

**PRE-SERVICE**

A Christmas Greeting

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

"One Solitary Life" by James Allen Francis

"An English Christmas"

A Christmas Prayer by Henri Van Dyke

"Noelle"

The Story of "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Pastor Kim Henning

Rich Holzer

Pastor Colie Bettivia

Bell Choir

Pastor Kim Henning

Bruce Suettinger

Pastor Colie Bettivia

**"O Little Town of Bethlehem"**

"O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."

For Christ is born of Mary and gathered all above,  
While mortal sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,  
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive him still the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray  
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

**"Folk Carol Suite"**

**Beverly Mark and Anita Rappe**

**PRELUDE**

“Christmas Gloria”

**SYMBOLIC ENTRY OF GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT**

Lucy Griffin, Dominick Springstube

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

We celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. I invite you to read with me the powerful words written by John:

**“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.”**

**INVOCATION**

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Come, we pray, into our homes this afternoon as we enter into this holy service of worship. Bring calm to our relationships, O Lord, for the sake of your glory. Bring peace of mind to those of us who are anxious and unsettled. Create a sense of sanctuary in these places we live. Banish from our midst bad thoughts, evil words, and all sorts of malice. We pray in the name of the One who was crucified and resurrected for our salvation. Amen.

**HYMN**

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

(If you are worshiping in the sanctuary, please do not sing.)

O Come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, Come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;

Come and behold him, born the King of angels:

O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,

O come let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;

Glory to God, all glory in the highest;

O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,

O come let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning, Jesus, to thee be all glory given.

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,

O come let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

## CHRISTMAS PRAYER

I invite you to join me as we speak with humility our faith in Jesus Christ,  
O Immanuel,  
O Wisdom from on high,  
O Branch of Jesse's stem,  
O Key of David,  
O Bright and Morning Star,  
O King of Nations,  
O Good Shepherd  
O Crucified and Resurrected One  
We rejoice and are made glad this Christmas Eve  
For truly you have come among us, full of grace and truth.  
Even now,  
Even here, come into our hearts again.  
Show us the path of knowledge.  
Comfort us in our mourning.  
Save us from our sin.  
Open wide our way to heaven.  
Turn our darkness into light.  
End our sad divisions  
And be for this world the One who brings peace and reconciliation.  
We praise you with great joy, as we express our trust in you. Amen.

SOLO

Anton Pietenpol

"I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day"

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Jim and Susie Miller

RESPONSE

Don Lewellen

"Light Shines in the Darkness"

(refrain) Oh the light shines in the darkness  
and the light will not be overcome  
In this world broken and scattered  
the light will not be overcome  
  
As our lives are turning  
and our hearts are yearning  
through the days of hurting  
deep in the night  
still the flame burns bright. (refrain)  
  
Tears throughout creation  
torn apart relations  
wounds across the nations  
hope may seem gone  
but the flame burns on. (refrain)

## THE SONG OF ZECHARIAH

Kathryn Ruhbusch

(Years ago, John the Baptist introduced many to Jesus. When John was born, his father uttered the following words.)

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David,  
as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,  
that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant,

the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we,  
being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear,  
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,

to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

## A PROPHETIC WORD FROM ISAIAH

Isaiah 9:2-7

(The scripture you are about to hear was written by Isaiah during a difficult time in Israel's history. The Babylonian armies are approaching Israel, and many presumed that Israel would be taken into captivity. The following scripture speaks of a coming Messiah who would bring hope and promise.....)

"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. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, 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 onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

## SPECIAL MUSIC

Jill Richmond

"It Wasn't His Child"

## SERMON ON THE STEPS.....

## SPECIAL MUSIC

Grace Notes

"Breath of Heaven"

## \*THE GOSPEL

Luke 2:1-20

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.

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.

## MEDITATION

"At the Center of It All"

## PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

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. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

## THE OFFERING

An offering to God should not be given out of guilt. Likewise, a gift to a food pantry or some other social cause should not be given out of coercion or pressure. We give because we feel blessed. We give because we know the power of love. We give to increase the spirit of goodwill.

## SOLO

Rich Holzer

"Mary, did you Know?"

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

We lift our voices to you in thanksgiving, O God. Thank you for lifting our hearts when we experience so much that is heavy and depressing. Thank you for showering us with love. Thank you for blessing us with hope. As we leave this place, help us to live our lives in joyful obedience through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

(Today is Christmas Eve. We are not able to be together as we have oft enjoyed. But tonight, we offer you an opportunity to come up the hill and under the overhang at Grace Congregational Church immediately after this service of worship. Your pastors will be outdoors from 5:15-6:15 p.m. serving the sacrament of Holy Communion. Remember, we practice an open communion. You don't need to be a member of this community to receive the sacrament. All are welcome.)

May Bethlehem's Child be with you!

**And also with you!**

May the Spirit of the living Christ find a place of welcome in your hearts.

**We offer our hearts to the One born in Bethlehem who loves us each anew each day.**

May we join our voices with the angels who long ago sang their praise to God.

**We join our voices with those of every time and place.**

With joy, we praise you, gracious God. In the beginning of time, the world was a swirling night of chaos when you first spoke and said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. You created this world in its grandeur, you made us in your image, and you kept covenant with us---even when we fell into sin. We give you thanks for Jesus Christ, our Lord, who by his life, death, and resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. Therefore, we join our voices with all the saints and angels and the whole creation to proclaim the glory of your name.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

In the silence of this night years ago, your Son came among us, and hardly no one noticed.

But angels sang and shepherds came to worship the Holy One born in a manger.

They brought no gold or silver; they presented their praise.

Tonight, we celebrate Jesus' birth. In days to come, we will follow him to Jerusalem.

And on a quiet Sunday morning, we will appear again to celebrate an empty grave.

**Christ was born, so we might have life;**

**Christ died, so we might have forgiveness;**

**Christ was raised, so we might have resurrection;**

**Christ will come again, to gather us together with him.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon those gathered for this Feast of Joy. As we are welcomed here, may we remember and include those rejected by the world. As we are fed by the bread, may we be strengthened to bring hope to all who are famished by despair. As we drink from the cup, nourish us, so we may go with peace into this world. And when our lives come to an end, we will join the angels of heaven in singing our praise to God.

## BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND POURING OF THE CUP

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

\*HYMN

“Silent Night”

(If you are worshipping ‘in person’, we request that you do not sing.)

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.

\*COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION

\*POSTLUDE

“Festival of Carols”

Anita Rappe and Beverly Mark

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GRACE CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

“We are a Christian Community Committed to Love, Service and Growth.”

2801 Garfield Street, Two Rivers, Wisconsin 54241 (920) 553-1222

Website <http://www.graceucc.org>

Missionaries: Mark Knowles and Danielle Murry-Knowles, Serving in Lesotho, Africa

Ministers: All the People of the Congregation

Pastor: Kim M. Henning

Associate Pastor: Colie Bettivia

Moderator: Betty Becker

Administrative Assistants: Debbie Augustine and Jean Schwalbe

Organist/Choir Director: Andrea Allington

Organist: Beverly Barnes Mark

Maintenance: Michael Timm

Sound Board: Bruce Suettinger

Worship Technology: Bill Heinsohn, Bob Randerson, Cal MacAuley

Usher: Jon Ruhbusch

Liturgist: Chris Blimel

## HOSPITALIZED

Anne Kleman was hospitalized last week, and continues her recovery at home. Nic Meissner was also hospitalized, and likewise continues his recovery at home.

## EPIPHANY CANDLE LIGHTING

Cal MacAuley and Pastor Colie are working together to create a video where we will light candles together for Epiphany Sunday. We need help! For instructions, contact Pastor Colie (920-973-5775, [pastorcolie@gmail.com](mailto:pastorcolie@gmail.com)) or watch the instruction video: [https://youtu.be/u4C\\_I7pJCCA](https://youtu.be/u4C_I7pJCCA). Videos need to be submitted by Dec 31.

## "INSPIRED" BY RACHEL HELD EVANS

Our Monday Adult Study Class **will not meet tomorrow, December 28**. Our next class will be Monday, January 4<sup>th</sup> when we will study pp. 51-80 of Rachel Held Evans book, "Inspired" and pages 20-23 from her study guide. Contact [khenning1956k@gmail.com](mailto:khenning1956k@gmail.com) if you would need a study book or if you would like to receive a Zoom link.

## ANNUAL MEETING OF GRACE CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST: JANUARY 31

### GRACE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH HOPE HOUSE VOLUNTEERS

Grace Congregational Church provided a dozen or so volunteers this week to serve at Hope House. On behalf of the church of Jesus Christ, thank you for extending yourselves beyond your comfort zones to provide this valuable service of faith and love. As this is being written, four adults and two children are living at Hope House.

For Your Information----Hope House received \$400 worth of gift cards from Fleet Farm to distribute to their guests. If you know someone who works at Fleet Farm, please extend your thanks.

### THANK YOU - TALENTED PEOPLE

Thank you to all of the musicians, sound and video technicians who made it possible to have full services filled with music of the season. We are so grateful for your time, talent and willingness to perform in new ways.

### ADULT CHOIR RESUMES

Adult Choir will resume on Wednesday, January 6. This group is open to everyone. If you're interested in joining us on Wednesdays via zoom, please contact Andrea.

### BELL CHOIR RESUMES

Bell Choir will resume on Monday, January 11 in the fellowship hall.

### QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTIONS – IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU?

A qualified charitable distribution allows you to make a tax free donation from an IRA owned by an individual who is age 70 ½ or over. The distribution would need to be paid directly from the IRA to a qualified charity such as the church. SO....

- If you are 70 ½ year or older

- If you have an IRA which you typically withdraw from to pay your pledge or personal expenses
- Talk with your financial advisor and they will provide you the form to withdraw from your IRA to pay your pledge or church donation directly to the church.
- It is Tax Free for both Federal and State Income Taxes.

**PEOPLE WE WANT TO HOLD IN PRAYER....**

Gene Krueger and Bob Stephens are residents at Hamilton Home/Northland Lodge. Ruth Hauboldt is a resident at River House Apartments. Lesley Huffer is at Rivers Bend, & Bruce Huffer is at his home. Marian Duescher is a resident at Harbor View. Florence Luecker is a resident at Magnolia Meadows. Jean Sutter is with her daughter, Heidi Bender: 880 S. Madison Ave. Pasadena, CA 91106. Nicole Kellner is a resident at Arborview Manor at 1520 Arboretum Drive, Apt. 1120, Oshkosh, WI 54901. Bill Monka is a resident at Tender Reflections. Bonnie Burmeister is living at 2790 Elm Tree Hill, Room 301, Howard, WI; Ginny Posny is a resident at Felician Village.

**OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN**

Bracken Tadych (PFC4 107-1 Lilac Lane, Minot AFB, ND 58704); Jacob Hearley (5350 Berger Street, Stop 1330, Moody AFB GA 31699); MSgt Kevin Allie (PSC37, 19 Naomi Street Magnolie, DE 19962); Gavin and Emily LeGreve (1344 N Lafayette Avenue; Bremerton WA 98312); Hunter Hayes (Air Force, Tucson, AZ); Kaity Pietenpol (Pietenpol-Prueter, Kaitlynn, 4540 Carswell Ave Unit C-9 Nellis AFB NV 89191); Alec Dewane (PVT Dewane, Alec J. B Btry 2-6 ADA BN 2750 Miner Rd. Fort Sill OK 73503); Jimmi & Alex Anderson, 164B Lower Brick Rd., Fort Riley, KS 66442

