

A SERVICE OF THE WORD

THE FESTIVAL OF CHRIST'S BIRTH

December 24, 2020

Nine-thirty in the Evening

*"The great challenge left to us
is to cut through all the glitz and glam of the season
that has grown increasingly secular and commercial,
and be reminded of the beauty of the One
who is Christmas." Bill Crowder*

MUSIC OF THE SEASON

"Once in Royal David's City"

Shelly Jaschob

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"

Bill Hampton, trumpet

"Come All Ye Shepherds"

Hand Bell Choir

"Mary, Did You Know?"

Rich Holzer

"Folk Carol Suite"

Keyboard Duet, Anita Rappe and Beverly Mark

CHRISTMAS GREETING

PRELUDE

"Jesu Bambino"

SYMBOLIC ENTRY OF GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

Kenna Stodola, Hallie Schroeter

CALL TO WORSHIP

Isaiah 9

Pastor Kim Give glory to God who reigns in heaven and on earth. Amen.
The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.
Those who lived in a land of deep darkness---on them light has shined.

Pastor Colie: 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 the plunder.

Pastor Kim 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.

Pastor Colie For all the boots of the tamping warriors,
And all the garments rolled in blood
Shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

Pastor Kim 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.

Pastor Colie 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 shall do this.

OPENING PRAYER

God of our salvation,
With thanksgiving and uplifted hearts, we come together as your people.
We have come to be a community, the Body of Christ.
We come to hear again the timeless story of our Lord's birth.
We come with expectation that your Holy Spirit will strengthen
The very soul of our being.
Shine, O Light of Christ, in the darkness of our world.
Sing, O angels, that we may hear your beloved voices:
"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.

CHRISTMAS CAROL

"Joy to the World"

(If you are worshipping 'in person', please do not sing)

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.

Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns; let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.

He 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.

A PRAYER OF CONFESSION BEFORE GOD.....

Ever-present God,
In the darkness of the world's pain, you have come to us.
In the darkness of the world's confusion, the Light of the world has come
with hope, with healing, and with power to reconcile.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.
O God, forgive us for doubting the light you have placed within each of us.
Forgive us for those actions that have diminished the faith of others.
Forgive us for choosing the wayward way of chaos.

(Silence for personal prayers of confession)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Merciful God,

fill us with the hope and the trust that Christ will in fact be born again and again, into this world and into our hearts. Let the love of Christ shine a light to guide us on our journey that is fraught with danger. We offer this prayer in the name of the One who was crucified and resurrected. Amen.

RESPONSE

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Vss. 3,4

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.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

Brian, Ginger, Noah, and Leyah VanElls

RESPONSE

"Light Shines in the Darkness" *Olson & Peterson*

Fay Henning

(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)

PSALM 96

Lance Anderson

(Psalm 96 is a glorious prayer of praise to God. At the beginning of this prayer, the psalmist invites us to enter into worship. As the psalm unfolds, the psalmist calls us to proclaim the wonder and power of God. Towards the end, the psalmist invites all of creation to join in this prayer of praise.)

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.
For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.
For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.
Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.
Worship the Lord in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.
Say among the nations, 'The Lord is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never
be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity.'
Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
let the field exult, and everything in it.

THE WORD OF GOD

John 1:1-14

(John records for us an account of the life of Jesus. Curiously, John's account of Jesus begins at the very beginning of time---when the world was created. In the fullness of time, Jesus appears to us in human flesh. Listen, for God's Word....)

CHOIR ANTHEM

"O Holy Night"

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the one, holy universal Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

CAROL

"You Are A New Day"

Grace Notes

A SERMON ON THE STEPS

Pastor Kim Henning

HAND BELL CHOIR

"In the Bleak Mid-Winter"

THE GOSPEL

Matthew 1:18-25

SERMON

"Joseph's Response"

Pastor Colie Bettavia

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE 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

We are called to be the Light of the World, to share the Love of the Holy One with all whom we encounter, to proclaim to those who have walked in darkness: "Do not be afraid! God is with you, no matter what." We are not called to hide our Light; no, we are called to let it shine, to give of ourselves, to bless the world. This is what it means to live as the Children of God. In that Spirit, our Christmas offering will now be received.

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Joseph's Lullaby"

Anton Pietenpol

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

O God of Hope, Faith, Joy and Peace

we ask your blessing upon the gifts we give so that they might become a blessing to this world that you love so very much. We trust that the lonely might know your love; that the hungry would be fed; that the grieving would be comforted; and that the doubting would know you. In the name of the Child of Bethlehem we pray. Amen.

*HYMN

"Silent Night"

(If you are worshiping '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 BLESSING

POSTLUDE

"A Celebration of Joy"

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:
Liturgist: *Adrienne Ewald*

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) or watch the instruction video: https://youtu.be/u4C_l7pJCCA. 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 4th 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 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

