

**CHRISTMAS EVE**  
**CHILDREN'S SERVICES AT CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

December 24, 2017  
11:00 AM and 5:00 PM

PRELUDE                      "Carillon on a Ukrainian Carol"                      Gerald Near

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: This special day calls us out  
with the exuberant hopefulness of children.

**ALL: If we'll allow it, this day can hold us spellbound  
with child-like wonder. If we're open, this day can challenge us to forget  
ourselves and become like children.**

One: Rejoice, friends, for this day is Christmas Eve, and God has shown up in the package  
of a tiny child.

\*HYMN OF PRAISE                      "O Come, All Ye Faithful"                      No. 234 (vs. 1, 3 & 4)

WORDS OF WELCOME

**PLEASE NOTE:** Children who want to participate in the Nativity will be directed when to go to the 3rd Floor to get ready. Please have an adult accompany your children to help them put on and take off whatever costume they choose.

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH**

Voice 1: One candle to remind us of the prophets, the second for John the Baptizer, the third for Mary, and the fourth for us. Now, the central candle for Jesus, born this night. Jesus is the light of the world.

Voice 2: Mary gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in strips of cloth, and laid him in a manger for his bed, for there was no room for them to stay in the inn. (Luke 2:7)

**All: Lord, you come as a tiny, fragile baby; yet we know that you are our strong  
God, always with us. May the flame of these candles remind us that you are  
the light of the world, and that when we follow you, we never walk alone in  
darkness, but walk surrounded in light.**

HYMN OF HONORING THE CHILD "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"                      No. 229  
**(Children are dismissed at this time to costume for Live Nativity)**

A STORY ABOUT CHRISTMAS "It All Comes Back"                      Pastor Chris

**UNISON CHRISTMAS EVE PRAYER FOR ALL (in unison)**

**Dear God, it's Christmas Eve, and we've all come here**

**together to worship you as we celebrate the birth of Jesus the Christ. You certainly chose a strange way to come to the earth and to get our attention. Nobody expected a baby to be born in a livestock shed far from home! Nobody expected angels to tell the great news to shepherds first, or for wise sages to follow the light of a new star. It wasn't what we were looking for –**

**but we're very glad that this is how you chose to be revealed to us and to give us the gift of new life. Thank you for everything you did for us, and do for us still, in Jesus. Help us as we show and tell others that this is why Christmas is so special. Amen.**

#### GIVING THE GIFTS WE HAVE BROUGHT

Offertory Hymn      "The Friendly Beasts"      No. 227

#### **CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION NATIVITY      (see last page at the bottom)**

Reading: The Birth of Jesus – Luke 2:1-7  
Hymn      "Away in the Manger"  
Reading: Good News Comes to the Shepherds – Luke 2:8-12  
Hymn      "The First Noel"  
Reading: The Angels Sing for Joy – Luke 2:13-14  
Hymn      "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"  
Reading: Wise Men Journey to See Jesus – Matthew 2:1-6  
Hymn      "We Three Kings"  
Reading: The Star Shines in the Darkness – Matthew 2:7-12  
Hymn      "There's A Song in the Air"

Children may re-join their families at this time.

At the conclusion of the service, please return costumes to the 3rd floor. Thank You!

A SPECIAL SONG      "Mary, Did You Know?"      Allie Kessel

LIGHTING OUR CANDLES      John 1: 9, 4-5

*"The true light that shines on everyone was coming into the world. Everything that was created received its life from him, and his life gave light to everyone. The light keeps shining in the dark, and the darkness has never put it out."*

**When passing the flame, please hold your lighted candle upright while the person next to you lights his/her candle from yours. Please keep a safe distance between candles, hair and clothing.**

\*CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

"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, 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!**

**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!**

\*BLESSING

\*POSTLUDE "Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella" arr. Keith Chapman

**A Christmas Eve prayer  
for the part of us that is spiritual but not religious -**

*Lord, I don't go to church much. I don't go at all...Well, I go at Christmas. I'm home then. I feel drawn to it. I like the Christmas Eve service, the coolness of the air. I feel like a child again...it's surreal. I know folks make fun of people like me. What can I say? I've drifted...but there is a pull back. Are You speaking to me? I hear something in the sermon, sometimes, but mostly it's the music and the candles. What is it about those candles? And the darkness? The darkness...or maybe it's the light, I suppose. Light and darkness. I know about light and darkness. I live in both. I've got some of both in me. I'm basically a good person, I think, but I struggle...I know about light and darkness. But I want to be closer to the light. I want to light that candle and sing those words: "And in the dark street shineth, the everlasting light..." I would like to live in that light, Lord. I would like to come home. I would like to discover you nearby, even with my doubts.*

**Away in the Manger**

Away in a manger, no crib for a 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.

**The First Noel**

The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay; in fields  
where they lay keeping their sheep, on a cold  
winter's night that was so deep.  
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.

**Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;  
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;  
with th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"  
Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the ever lasting Lord;  
late in time behold him come, off-spring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the God-head see; hail th'incarnate Deity,  
pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

**We Three Kings**

We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
field and fountain,  
moor and mountain, following yonder star.  
O star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright,  
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

**There's a Song in the Air**

There's a song in the air! There's a star in the sky!  
There's a mother's deep prayer and a  
baby's low cry! And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,  
for the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!  
We rejoice in the light, and we echo the song  
that comes down through the night from the heavenly throng.  
Ay! We shout to the lovely evangel they bring,  
and we greet in his cradle our Savior and King!