

**You Are Welcome Here!**



**An "Open and Affirming" Congregation  
of the United Church of Christ  
in Germantown, MD**

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF SENECA VALLEY

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December 24th, 2020

Christmas Eve

7:00 pm Zoom

**Our Mission**

UCC Seneca Valley is an open and affirming, progressive and inclusive spiritual community that is centered in the belief that we are all beloved children of God. We seek to joyfully share Christ's message of hope through creative expression, deepening connections between people, advocating for justice, and serving our community.

**Worship Participants**

Greeter: Dan Davis

Liturgist: Suzanne Schmidt

Pastor: Rev. Holly R. Jackson

Deacon: Jen Fuss

Director of Music Ministry: Stefan Petrov

Zoom Technical Support: Patrick Jackson

Advent Wreath Lighters: Debra & Madelyn Anderson

Scripture Readers: Deborah Tomblyn, Chloe Jackson, Dave Schwab, Julia McCune, Milan Yu, Tucker Singeltary

**Instructions for Zoom Worship:**

In order to get the most out of this interactive service we suggest you have with you a nativity set with at least a few moveable pieces that you can add to the scene as we go through the service, an Advent Wreath if you have one or at least one candle you can light for singing with Silent Night, and bread or a cracker and juice or wine for communion. Keep your microphone on mute during worship unless told otherwise. Words in bold are meant to be said aloud at home with the Pastor or Liturgist who will say them on the Zoom call. Sing along at home to the sung responses and hymns. Use the chat box for the passing of the peace and prayer requests or other worship responses. Chat directly to individuals as appropriate. If you are having technical issues please chat message Patrick Jackson for help. The Zoom room opens at 6:30pm and worship begins at 7.

## Preparing and Praying

### MUSIC TO PREPARE OUR HEARTS

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‘Infant Holy, Infant Lowly’

*Laura Lineberger & Beth Lauriat*

### WELCOME AND WORDS OF INTRODUCTION

Pastor: In this season leading up to this night, we have been hearing the Good News from all the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John because we have *needed* good news and that’s what “Gospel” actually means. We have heard stories of courage all along our journey—of people who have sung out songs of hope, love, joy, and peace. Into the shadows of this year we have whispered ever louder as the light grew: I believe in the sun even when it’s not shining. I believe in love even when I can’t feel it. I believe in God even when God is silent. Our candles and Advent wreaths have been a witness to the light we believe has come, and is coming. And now we have arrived at this wonderous night. We are worshipping in a new way this year, but we are still together, still here to be a part of the mystery and experience God’s miracles. Welcome to Christmas Eve worship.

### PRELUDE

“Still, Still, Still”

*arr. Joseph Martin*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Liturgist: Sssh. Can you hear it?  
An expectant silence,  
a hushed anticipation,  
as if the very galaxy  
is holding its breath.

**People: There are some truths  
even the stars know,  
like darkness, like loneliness  
and how the night  
can be a living thing.**

Liturgist: And how once, long ago,  
the night waited in wonder  
along with the darkness  
and the loneliness,  
for the sound of a baby’s cry,

**People: for the miraculous  
to come down  
to the earth mundane.**

Leader: Even now,  
even on this very different Christmas,  
we still wait expectantly,  
holding our breath,  
wondering what God has in store for us this night.

**People: Shh? Can you hear it?**

## **LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE**

- Reader 1: We believe in the presence of Emmanuel—God with us.  
This is the night we celebrate that the Holy came in human form to be light in our lives, to speak to us, touch us, comfort us, and call us. Even in the midst of fear, of challenge, of struggle—even when our view is obscured by clouds of doubt, God has ignited the flame of hope, love, joy, and peace within us. Let us glow with its brilliance from the inside out.
- Reader 2: You are invited to light all four candles on your Advent Wreath at home and one center candle that represents Christ with us. Or if you don't have an Advent Wreath just light one candle to represent Christ's light with us tonight.

## **THE CHRIST CANDLE IS LIT**

### **MUSICAL RESPONSE**

"I Believe"

by Mark Miller

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

- Leader: When Jesus was born, he came to a world filled with poverty, and violence, and fear. He lived among people who did not always walk their walk perfectly, which is to say, Jesus was no stranger to sin. Our mistakes and failures come as no surprise to him. His love and mercy should come as no surprise to us. Therefore, let us make our confession before God and one another, first in silent prayer.  
*(A chime calls us to a moment of silence.)*

- People: **God of stars and angels, God of sheep and lambs,  
God of abundance and grace:  
You know us well, better than we know ourselves.  
You hear us cry "Gloria!" and "Praise!"  
And you watch us tear things apart with our words and deeds.  
You hear us say "Thy will be done" and "use me, O God"  
And you watch us do the minimum in response to cries for help.  
You know us, and you love us, and you forgive us.  
Hear us now say, "Help us to change; turn us around.  
Make us more loving and courageous and hopeful. "  
This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.**

- Leader: Friends, hear the Good News: God so loved the world that God sent Jesus to us, not to condemn the world but in order to save it! The whole of the world is healed and forgiven through him, including you. Thanks be to God!

### **PASSING OF THE PEACE**

## HYMN

*"O Come All Ye Faithful"*  
*Sung by Patrick Jackson*

*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!*

*O come, let us adore Him (3X)*  
*Christ the Lord*

*Oh, sing, choirs of angels*  
*Sing in exultation*  
*Oh, come, oh come ye to Bethlehem*  
*Come and behold Him*  
*Born the King of Angels*

*O come, let us adore Him (3X)*  
*Christ the Lord*

## Hearing and Seeing LESSONS AND CAROLS

### A POEM TO BEGIN

*"God in Solidarity"*

Enfleshed

### LESSON 1

God calls Mary and Joseph

Luke 1 & Matthew 1

*Add Mary and Joseph figures to the manger*

### CAROL

*"In the Bleak Midwinter"*

**In the bleak mid-winter  
Frosty wind made moan;  
Earth stood hard as iron,  
Water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,  
Snow on snow,  
In the bleak mid-winter  
Long ago.**

**Angels and Archangels**

**May have gathered there,  
Cherubim and seraphim  
Thronged the air;  
But only His Mother  
In her maiden bliss  
Worshipped the Beloved  
With a kiss.**

LESSON 3

Preparing the Stable

Luke 2

*Add animal figures to the manger*

CAROL

**"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 mortals 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 men on earth***

LESSON 4

The Birth of Jesus

Luke 2

*Add baby Jesus to the manger*

Children's Story

**"Twas the Evening Before Christmas"**  
by Glenys Nellist

CAROL

**Silent Night**  
*Performed by Milan Yu*

LESSON 5

Angels and Shepherds go the Manger

Luke 2

*Add Angels and Shepherds to the manger*

CAROL "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"

*It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:  
"Peace on the earth, good will to men,  
from heaven's all-gracious King."  
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.*

*For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old,  
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold  
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,  
and the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.*

LESSON 6                      The Magi are led by the star to Jesus                      Matthew 2

*Add Wise Ones to the manger*

A POEM TO END                      "God Around Us"                      enfleshed

CAROL                      "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

*Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born 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 new born King!"*

*Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord;  
late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th' incarnate Deity,  
pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.  
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"*

*Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,  
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"*

## Celebrating and Feasting

### CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

#### WELCOME TO THE TABLE

Pastor: Our God, Song of the Ages, be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

**People: We lift them up to the Lord.**

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Pastor: It is right, and a good and joyful thing,  
always and everywhere to raise our voices with you,  
tuning ourselves to you, creator of heaven and earth.

You filled the night of creation with music and light,  
setting in motion the rhythms  
of sunrise and sunset, of sound and silence.  
You formed within us your love song  
and breathed into us the breath of life.

Sometimes our voices are choked off  
and we cannot find your melody.  
But you keep the bass line humming,  
waiting for us to rejoin the chorus.  
You show up in the worst of times  
offering us the way to freedom in you.  
Your voice breaks through in prophets whose songs  
wake us up to the kin-dom you desire.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.  
Breaking forth into light from the blessed darkness of a womb,  
he brought light that illumined a path  
so we could see our way to more beloved community.

Your Spirit anointed him to raise his voice  
to preach good news to the poor,  
to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
and to announce that the time had come  
when you would save your people.  
He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners  
and invited us to do this too.



We remember Jesus' self-giving love and the offer of himself for others, even those who gave him over to death, and so in response we pray for ourselves and others and continue to learn to act on those prayers:

God of All, we pray for your people.  
For those who are afraid and oppressed,  
may you give courage.  
For those suffering conflict and fear, may you bring peace.  
For those who long for food and water, may they be filled.  
For those who long for justice, may it be fulfilled.  
We pray also for ourselves and our community.  
That those in hospital and in care feel your strength.  
That those who are alone and anxious feel you near.  
That those who are ill in body and in spirit be comforted. That our friends  
and family be blessed by healing and love.  
Hear our prayers, O God,  
and in your mercy, answer.

Pastor: And together let us pray the prayer Jesus taught us:  
*(Feel free to use whatever words or language for this prayer are most meaningful to you. The words below are a suggestion of one version of The Lord's Prayer.)*

**Our God who dwells in Heaven, hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come, your 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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

On the night on which Jesus was betrayed, he sat at supper with his disciples. While they were eating, he took a piece of bread.  
I invite you now to raise your bread at home up with both hands.  
Jesus said a blessing broke it, and gave it to them with the words,  
'This is my body. Given for you. Do this to remember me.'  
I invite you to break your bread and return it to your plate.

Later, he took a cup of wine, and gave thanks for it.  
Raise your cup up now before you.  
Jesus said, 'This cup is God's forgiveness poured out for you and for all people. Drink from it, all of you, to remember me'.  
I invite you to put your cup down as we bless these elements.

Come to us, life-giving Spirit of God. Bless us, these gifts, and what we do here, so that we might sing your song of love for your people and for your world. Amen!

### **SHARING OF THE BREAD AND CUP**

*(At this time you are invited to serve yourself or those with you the bread saying something like, "The Body of Christ given for you" or "The Bread of Life given for you". You can dip the bread in the cup saying something like, "The Cup of Salvation shared with you" or "The Cup of Blessing shared with you." We will pause here for a few moments so everyone has a chance to receive the elements.)*

### **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

**People:** God, we give you thanks that you have come to us – in the child of Bethlehem, in this bread and cup, and in your answer to all of our hopes and your offer of peace, deeper than any truce, truer than the upheaval that surrounds us. You have comforted us with your promise and your presence so that we too may spread the welcome wings of your good tidings. Amen.

### **Sending and Leaving**

#### **PASSING THE LIGHT**

*Turn down or off the lights in the room you are in. If possible, even if you normally have your camera off turn it on just for this song. Light a candle, either one of the ones you already lit tonight or a different candle. We will have a moment to light the candles and then look at our congregation together with our lights.*

### **HYMN**

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,  
heav'nly 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!*

## **BENEDICTION**

Leader: If you choose, you can be instruments of hope in the world.  
So choose. Believe in and live out the promise of justice and peace. If you choose, you can counter the voices of anxiety and despair in the world.  
So choose. Sing songs of hope because you believe that the world can be changed. If you choose, you can fight against the fear that freezes the heart of many. So choose. Tell of the love that conquers fear and how you believe in the love of a child in a manger. The choice is ours to make, how we live into the possibilities of Christmas. The beauty is that we do not live out the choice by our own strength. We go with God, who lights our way forward. We go with Jesus who is born again in our lives right now. And we go with the Holy Spirit whispering in our ears and shouting into our lives, "The Savior is born, the Savior is born! Joy to the world!"

*You may now extinguish your candle  
remembering that you now carry the light of Christ out into the world.*

*"Call to Worship" by Lucinda Hynett, "Prayer of Confession" by Beth Merrill Neel, "Advent Candle Lighting" and "Communion Liturgy" and Worship Theme and Design adapted from Worship Design Studio by Marcia McFee. Used, adapted, and live-streamed with permission. [www.worshipdesignstudio.com](http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com).*

**New to our Congregation or have questions?** Please consider leaving us your contact information at <https://forms.gle/Rjicc2jdMmzCgCFh8>

## **Do You Have a Story About Your 2020 Star Word?**

On Sunday, January 3rd, we will celebrate Epiphany and receive our new Star Words for 2021. (These will be mailed to you. If you want a Star Word and we don't have your mailing address, please get it to us so we can mail one to you.) If you have a story about your 2020 Star Word and you are willing to share it with the congregation please let Holly know -email [HollyRJackson@gmail.com](mailto:HollyRJackson@gmail.com). You can share live on Zoom, send in a video you make, share a picture, or write a short paragraph to be shared in worship. This has become a beloved tradition at UCCSV and we are excited to see how God has been moving in your life through your Star Word this past year.