

December 22, 2024 ~ 9 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.
First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota

Lessons
& Carols

A decorative graphic of musical notation, including a five-line staff with several eighth and quarter notes, positioned between the words 'Lessons' and 'Carols'.

1031 S. Euclid Ave. Sarasota, FL 34237 ~ (941) 953-7044
www.uccsarasota.com

Flowers given by **Jeffrey Carlson**, in loving memory of his son, **Randy**

PRELUDE *O Come O Come Emmanuel* arr. Sondra Tucker
Gianluca Farina and Morgen Low, trumpet; Hugo Bliss, horn; Brad Williams, trombone;
Nate Seman, tuba; and Marcelina Suchocha, timpani

INVITATION to WORSHIP adapted from Kate Bowler

One: Blessed are you with open arms welcoming this week.

Many: **Blessed are you whose arms are exhausted from preparing, wrapping, decorating, baking cookies for the pastor because of hints in sermons.**

One: Blessed are you who are done waiting, who feel weary and worn out.

Many: **Blessed are you who long to find faithful ways to meet another's hopeless, peaceless-ness, love-lost state.**

One: Blessed are you who come with open hearts to the mystery and marvel of this week.

Many: **With hopes and fears of all the years, we inch closer to the holy night turns the world upside down and right side up.**

*OPENING HYMN *Who Would Think That What Was Needed* #153

Who would think that what was needed to transform and save the earth, might not be a plan or army proud in purpose, proved in worth? Who would think, despite derision, that a child should lead the way? God surprises earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas Day.

Shepherds watch and sages wonder, monarchs scorn and angels sing; such a place as none would reckon hosts a holy, helpless thing; Stabled beasts and passing strangers watch a baby laid in hay: God surprises earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas Day.

Centuries of skill and science span the past from which we move, yet experience questions whether with such progress we improve. In our search for sense and meaning, lest our hopes and humor fray, God surprises earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas Day.

*OPENING PRAYER

God of unfinished to-do lists, good plans left undone, messes that no vacuum cleaner can ever pick up, meet us this morning . You don't need a mansion with matching furniture, You entered our world in a dirty, drafty stable. You don't need a fest, You continually offer us ordinary bread at communion. You don't need things perfect and polished, You came into a beautifully broken world. Come again, anew, and afresh. Remind us that Christmas is more than a day, rather a way we orient our lives. Open our sacred imaginations to hear the promises of scripture that invite our souls to lean and listen for Your hope, peace, love and joy which have been since the beginning. Amen.

FESTIVAL of LESSONS and CAROLS

INTRODUCTION Finding the Thread and Theme

CAROL *Once in Royal David's City* (1, 2, and 4) #145

Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed, Where a mother laid her baby in a manger for a bed; Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little child.

Jesus came to earth from heaven, who is God and Head of all, Sheltered in a rustic stable, cradled in a common stall; With the poor and meek and lowly lived on earth our Savior holy.

Jesus was our childhood's pattern, daily like us lived and grew, Jesus, little, weak, and helpless, tears and smiles and comfort knew. Jesus felt the pain of sadness, and the joyous lift of gladness.

FIRST LESSON Original Blessing Genesis 1, *selected verses*

CAROL *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* #144

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the Christ-child bring; Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinner reconciled!" Joyful all you saints arise, join the triumph of the skies; With the angel host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!" Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the Christ-child bring!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord! Late in time the Savior comes, offspring of the Virgin's womb. Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity, Pleased on earth with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel. Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the Christ-child bring!"

Hail the Bearer of God's peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness, Light and life our Savior brings, risen with radiant, healing wings. Mildly laying glory by, born that we no more may die, Born to raise us all from earth, born to give us second birth. Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the Christ-child bring!"

SECOND LESSON God's Interruption Genesis 12, *selected verses*

CAROL *Come, O Long Expected Jesus*

Come, O long expected Jesus, born to set all people free; From our fears and sins release us; grant us your true liberty. Israel's strength and consolation, hope to all the earth impart; Dear desire of every nation, enter every longing heart.

Born all people to deliver, born a born a child, you came to reign! Born to rule on earth forever, come, be known to us again. By your own eternal Spirit, come to claim us as your own; By your all sufficient merit, let us share your cross and crown.

THIRD LESSON

Holy Disruption

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

CAROL

Isaiah the Prophet Has Written of Old

#108

Isaiah the prophet has written of old how God's new creation shall come. Instead of the thorn tree, the fir tree shall grow; the wolf shall lie down with the lamb, the lamb, the wolf shall lie down with the lamb.

The mountains and hills shall break forth into song, the peoples be led forth in peace; The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea, the sea, as the waters cover the sea.

Yet nations still prey on the meek of the world, and conflict turns parent from child. Your people despoil all the sweetness of earth; the brier and the thorn tree grow wild, grow wild, the brier and the thorn tree grow wild.

God, bring to fruition your will for the earth, that no one shall hurt or destroy, That wisdom and justice shall reign in the land and your people shall go forth in joy, in joy, your people shall go forth in joy.

FOURTH LESSON

God's Justice

Micah 6, selected verses

ANTHEM

Let All Mortal Flesh

G. Holst

FIFTH LESSON

God's Holy Idea

Luke 1:26-35, 38

CAROL

Angels, from the Realms of Glory (vs. 1 and 4)

#126

Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth; As you sang creation's story, now proclaim Messiah's birth; Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, give thanks and sing.

Saints, before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear, Suddenly, your prayers attending, Christ beside you shall appear. Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, give thanks and sing.

SIXTH LESSON

God's Ways, Not Ours

Luke 2:1-7

LIGHTING the CANDLE of JOY

CAROL

What Child is This (vs. 1 & 2)

#148

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? This, this, the angels sing, is Christ, God's holy offering; Haste, haste your praise to bring the babe, the child of Mary!

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. Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be born for me, for you; Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the child of Mary!

CAROL

Of the Parent's Heart Begotten (vs. 1)

#118

Of the Parent's heart begotten when the worlds were yet to be, One there was with no beginning, One who is eternally – Source and Ending of all things that have been, and all things that are to be, forever and forever.

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE 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.

OFFERING/ANTHEM

Rejoice! Rejoice Believers

Benjamin Harlan

*DOXOLOGY/PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**What can I offer, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wise one, I would do my part; But what can I offer all my heart.**

*CLOSING HYMN

Go Tell It on the Mountain

#154

Refrain: Go tell it on the mountain, over the hill and everywhere. Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Refrain

The shepherds feared and trembled when lo! above the earth Rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. Refrain

Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born, And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. Refrain

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Thaxted

Gustav Holst

ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ December 22, 2024

Christmas Love Offering ~ Every year the Mission Team has two major fundraisers—Christmas Love and Easter Love. At Christmas we concentrate our giving on local charities while the Easter focus is for national and worldwide charities. With each Love Offering we choose one organization that supports each of our three covenants. This year we have chosen: African American Studies at the Betty J. Johnson Library ~ Racial Justice Covenant; ALSO Youth ~ Open and Affirming Covenant; Sarasota Bay Estuary ~ Creation Justice Covenant. We are also supporting the following non-profit organizations who work hard to help our neighbors in

need. We will be talking about some of these organizations in church during December: All Faiths Food Bank, All Faiths Backpack Program, Baby Basics, Resurrection House, Family Promise; SURE (Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity; Second Chance Last Opportunity; UCC Christmas Fund. **Most of these programs have been helping those in our community whose homes were damaged from the hurricanes.** Many are adding to their programs as the needs in our community continue to grow. Last year we raised \$16,000, and we have set our goal at \$20,000 this year. Please write your check to the church and put Christmas Love in the memo line. Blessings ~ Jan Andersen, Terri Crawford, Evelyn Crooks, Gretchen Friend-Jones, Toska Strong, Laura Taylor, Nancy Taylor

CALLING ALL BUCKET FILLERS ~ JOIN A TEAM IN 2025 ~Yes, YOU! We are blessed with so many opportunities to serve. There is joy in doing what we can to make a difference. **Won't you join us? What You Can Do:** Go to: uccsarasota.com; Select: About Us (at the top) and "Organization" from the dropdown menu; Scroll to: "Discover our Church's Organizational Structure ~ Check out the committees, groups and teams to learn more and open the "Statement on Structure" for specific tasks and meeting information. Contact a member of the Nominating Committee for more information: Carol McCloud, Harold Mezile, Nancy Morris

CHRISTMAS EVE ~~

4:00 p.m. ~ Pre-service music begins at **3:45** with guest musicians, **Betsy Hudson-Traba**, flute, and **Fernando Traba**, bassoon. On this holy night, we will blend poetry by soaking in God's love.

7:00 p.m. ~ Pre-service music at **6:40** with guest musicians **Natalie Helm**, cellist, and **Meghan Jones**, violinist. Our Chancel Choir will share special anthems and carols. Our children, youth and families will process the figures of the creche. With a holy hum that hovers throughout the entire service, we celebrate God's arrival in our hearts, homes, and world. **THIS SERVICE WILL BE LIVESTREAMED.**

11:00 p.m. ~ Arrive early at **10:40** to hear the beautiful pre-service music of cello, violin, and organ. Featured guest musicians from the Sarasota Orchestra are **Natalie Helm** and **Meghan Jones**. Communion will be celebrated at this service and as the seconds tick toward Midnight we join our voices in singing, "Silent Night" for all Sarasota to hear.

ONE service on December 29 at 11 a.m. ~ we will join on the *last* Sunday of 2024 and continue our Christmas Celebration. We welcome Stephen Fancher as our organist on this day.

On January 5, 2025 ~ the 9 a.m. worship service will move to the chapel for the winter. We look forward to this more intimate setting to worship and praise God together.

"Unveiled Strength: Portraits of Intimacy and Vulnerability," featuring evocative works of award-winning Bradenton-based artist **Gary LaParl**, will be on display from **December 15, 2024, to January 16, 2025**, at the Lexow Gallery at Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota. This collection of portraits explores complex themes of male relationships and vulnerability, inviting viewers to engage with deep, often overlooked aspects of masculinity. The opening morning reception is Sunday, December 15, 11:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. The evening reception is **Friday, January 10, 5-7 p.m.**

Year-End Contributions ~ According to the IRS, the year a contribution can be deducted is based on the date when the donor relinquishes control of the money. That means we will be handling your contributions as follows:

	IRS Deduction Year
Checks dated December 2024 received by the Church in December 2024	2024
Checks dated December 2024, postmarked in 2024 received by the Church in January 2024	2024
Checks dated December 2024 received in offering plate January 2025 (backdated)	2025
Checks dated December 2024, postmarked in 2025 received by the Church in January 2025(backdated)	2025
Checks dated January 2025 received in offering plate December 2024 (post-dated)	2025
Checks dated December 2024 received in 2024 as a pre-payment of 2025 pledge	2024

Women’s Association Program for **Tuesday, January 7, 2025** which is devoted to the **Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) from Immokalee, FL**. Our presenter will be **Silvia Perez, Senior Staff Member of the CIW**. She will be ably assisted by **Giselle Ramirez, Campaign Coordinator and Translator**. Silvia's presentation will provide: 1. an overview of the formation of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in the early 1990s; 2. an account of the victories of the Campaign for Fair Food - which educates consumers on the issue of farm labor exploitation and forges alliances between farm workers and consumers in an effort to enlist the market power of major corporate buyers to help end the exploitation; 3. background information on the creation of the Food Program - a groundbreaking model for social responsibility based on a unique partnership among farm workers, Florida tomato growers and participating buyer; 4. an update on the fight for farm worker human rights today. **All are welcome. Come to Fellowship Hall at 11:30 am, enjoy lunch at 12 noon (\$15), and our program at 12:30.** Please sign up after church service, or call the church office, 941-953-7044. Questions? Call Terri Crawford, (239) 896-7029. We are asking for donations of printer paper and/or other office supplies for the CIW staff. They print their own booklets for education sessions they present to the workers on the farms and these supplies would be a great help.

THIS WEEK

Sunday, December 22 Fourth Sunday of Advent ~ Lessons and Carols with Brass, Percussion and Choir

- 9 a.m. ~ Early Service
- 11 a.m. ~ Worship, Sanctuary and Online
- Noon ~ Fellowship Time ~ Christmas Breads

Tuesday, December 24

Candlelight Service at 4 p.m. ~ special musicians ~ Betsy and Fernando Traba

Candlelight Service at 7 p.m. ~ LIVESTREAMED ~ Natalie Helm, cello; Megan Jones, violin; Greg Stead, oboe and our amazing choir

Candlelight Service at 11 p.m. ~ Natalie Helm, cello; Megan Jones, violin; Greg Stead, oboe and our amazing choir ~ Holy Communion celebrated

Wednesday, December 25 ~ Church office closed ~ Merry Christmas ~ May God's hope, peace, love, and joy be experience in your heart/home/life

Thursday, December 26 ~ Church office open

Sunday, December 29 ~ Honoring Kwanzaa ~ ONE SERVICE ~ Stephen Fancher organist

11 a.m. ~ Worship, Sanctuary and Online

Noon ~ Fellowship Time ~ featuring DJ Paul and locally made sweet potato pie!