

December 24, 2024 ~ 7:00 p.m.
First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota



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

December 24, 2024

Christmas Eve

7 P.M.

PRELUDES: Meghan Jones, violin; Natalie Helm, cello; Greg Stead, oboe

ANTHEM

Let All Mortal Flesh

Gustav Holst

INVITATION to WORSHIP on THIS HOLY NIGHT

***CAROL**

O Come All Ye Faithful

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;

Refrain: **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 heav'n above:

"Glory to God, all glory in the highest!" (*Refrain*)

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;

Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n;

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing; (*Refrain*)

***OPENING PRAYER**

God of carols that set our hearts stirring and send goosebumps down our arms, open our sacred imaginations to sense You hovering around us. God of handbells ringing randomly, meet us in the uncertainty we carry. God of weary travelers, meet us in our aching feet and exhausted souls. God of Mary and Joseph, who bravely and boldly followed You, help us do the same. God of shepherds who were surprised, energized, and mobilized to let You disrupt and interrupt their lives, do *that* again for each of us, we pray. God of a cast of characters that continues to expand and includes *every person* here tonight. *We* step into the straw. *We* stare at the messy manger that reminds us that perfection is never the point, and *we* join in belting out unending song of angels singing gloria to You.

***GLORIA**

Angels We Have Heard on High

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;

Come adore on bended knee, Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.

Glo-ri-a in excelsis Deo, Glo-ri-a in excelsis Deo.

ENTER THE STORY

Luke 1:1-4

Olivia Bixby

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph 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.

SINGING THE STORY

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.**

DIVING DEEPER INTO THE STORY

Luke 1:5-7

Olivia Bixby

⁵ Joseph went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ 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.

LIGHTING the CHRIST CANDLE

SINGING THE STORY

What Child Is This

(We invite all children to the back of the sanctuary to help with processing the creche)

**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 is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the son of Mary.
So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh, come peasant, king, to own Him:
The King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone Him.
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the son of Mary.**

PROCESSING the CRECHE

Away in the Manger

ANTHEM

Still, Still, Still

arr. Mack Wilberg

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a Child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom He favors!" ¹⁵When 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." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this Child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

SERMON

What If

SOLO

O Holy Night ~ Lauren Patsos, Soprano

A. Adams

*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! 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.**

PASTORAL PRAYER & 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 *Advent Promise*, Greg Stead, Oboe Ruth Schram

*LITANY of ADORATION

One: On this holy night, we have stood silently in the straw with Joseph to behold God's love in the flesh.

Many: And our hearts have stood on tiptoe with a soft melody arising.

All singing: (softly) O come, let us adore him

One: With Mary, we have pondered God's beautifully messy way of entering our world again, anew, and afresh.

Many: The holy hymn crescendos to share the good news of great joy!

All singing: (little louder) O come, let us adore him

One: With the shepherds, our souls sing out with a joyful shout that the world is forever changed.

Many: For God so loves the world, God moves into our souls and neighborhood to reside and reign for every day.

All singing: (Full voice) O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

*CLOSING HYMN *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 the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn 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 man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"**

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Joy to the World* by G.F. Handel/arr. Virgil Fox

Greeters/ Ushers: John Ristow, Pauline Geary, Greg Partridge, Doug Potter,
Jan and Ed Andersen

Liturgists: River Rogers, Olivia Bixby

On behalf of the staff of First Congregational United Church of Christ we wish you God's love during this sacred season. We pray the mystery of this holy night will linger in your life and please remember **you** are always welcome here. With God's great love ~ Pastor Wes, Heidie Heath, Pamela Gansch-Boythe, Sherry Glover, Douglas Kingsley, and Robin Reich. If there is any way we can extend a warm welcome or God's love, please be in touch.

There will be ONE worship service on **December 29 at 11 a.m.** ~ celebrating Kwanzaa and Christmas ~ special fellowship time to follow service.

Please join us for worship every **Sunday** at **9 am (chapel)** and **11 am (sanctuary)**. We livestream our **11 am worship** to create an expansive community singing praise to God. **Special events coming up in 2025**

January 18 ~ Concert featuring Bobby Jo Valentine ~ singer/songwriter

January 19 ~ Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday

ALL February ~ Celebrating Black History Month

February 16 ~ Dr. Kevin Fenton Artist in Residence Weekend

ALL March ~ Celebrating Women in the Gospels

March 5 ~ Ash Wednesday Service

The Wayless Way Offering ~ Your Life as a Curriculum ~ NEW offering for 2025 ~ The event will be **hybrid** (in the Oasis Center and Zoom). **January 6th, 13th, 20th & 27th 4 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.** As we begin a New Year, we will listen to our lives as one way God shows up. Beginning on Epiphany, January 6th, we will gather to open our hearts to God who is moving in our lives through prayer, hymns, and scripture. Throughout the month we will learn more about Family Systems Theory (January 13th); Praying the Wayless Way (January 20th); and Listen/ Discerning God in our Lives (January 27th). Please note, while there is a thread that will connect each week, you are welcome to attend when you are able without missing a beat. **For more information and to register for the conversation, please contact Pastor Wes.**

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Phone: (941)953-7044 Our website: www.uccsarasota.com

*We are a **Creation Justice; Open & Affirming; and Racial Justice Congregation**
of the United Church of Christ*

MINISTERS: All the Members

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Robin Reich, Interim Business Manager

OFFICERS: Moderator: Harold Mezile
Vice Moderator: Carol McCloud
Past Moderator: Nancy Morris
Co-Treasurer: Robin Reich
Co-Treasurer: Roxanne Schwoch
Secretary: Susan Moore

Morning Meditations posted every weekday: on Facebook &
Pastor Wes' blog ~ www.gracetraces.blogspot.com

Please join us for Worship Sunday Mornings
9 a.m. in the Chapel
11 a.m. in the Sanctuary and Livestreamed
(Please note: One service on December 29 at 11 a.m.)