

December 17, 2023~ 9 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.  
First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota

# Christmas Joy

A large red Christmas ornament is positioned between the words "Christmas" and "Joy". The ornament features a gold-colored cap and a gold ring at the top. It is decorated with black musical notes and stems on a white staff. A green pine branch with yellow-gold tips is attached to the top of the ornament's cap.

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[www.uccsarasota.com](http://www.uccsarasota.com)

## **Advent Four: Candle of JOY**

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Flowers given by: Jeff & Donna Carlson in loving memory of our son, **Randy Carlson**

### **PRELUDE**

*In Dulci Jubilo*

arr. Frackenpohl

**Brass Quintet:** Gianluca Farina, trumpet; Ben Hauser, trumpet; Hugo Bliss, horn; Brad Williams, trombone; Nate Seman, tuba; Matt Kibort, percussion

### **INVITATION to WORSHIP**

*Blessing of Courage*

by Jan Richardson

### **\*OPENING HYMN**

*Angels From the Realms of Glory*

#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.**

**Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night,  
God with us is now residing, yonder shines the infant light;  
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, give thanks and sing.**

**Sages, leave your contemplation, brighter visions beam afar;  
Seek the great Desire of Nations, guided by Christ's natal star;  
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.**

### **\*OPENING PRAYER**

**Conducting and Composing God, You continue to write a symphony of hope, peace, love, and joy into the song of our life. We confess that often our ears are tuned toward the missed notes, miscues, and mistakes. We confess that we are quick to notice someone *else* being out of key, and not realize or recognize that our notes are flatter than bread without yeast. We confess that while we sing about hope, peace, joy, and love today, we don't always feel those flames warming our hearts. Too often we pack away the truths of Advent quickly in the New Year rather than letting this season linger. God, help us keep Christmas, not only this week before December 24<sup>th</sup>, but every week in 2024. Rekindle in us a way of life that You infuse, imprint, and inspire us to share with the world. In the name of the One who is our light and life, Jesus our Christ. Amen.**

### **LIGHTING the CANDLE of JOY**

### **RESPONSE**

*Light One Candle for Joy*

**Light one candle for joy, one bright candle for joy,  
God brings joy to ev'ry heart, God comes! God comes!**

**ANTHEM***Gloria, from Christmas Cantata*

Daniel Pinkham

Refrain: *Glory to God in the highest and on earth to all of good will peace and love abiding.*Vs 1: *O be joyful in the Lord, ye nations, with gladness, serve the Lord.*Vs 2: *Come before His presence with singing, joy, and exultation.*Vs 3: *Know ye, that the Lord is strong and mighty.**He created us, and not we ourselves. Alleluia!***ENGAGING SCRIPTURE**

Luke 1:39-56

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name; indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

**SERMON***Magnify God***PASTORAL PRAYER 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.**

**MISSION MOMENT**

Lois Wilkins, Bettye J. Johnson Library

**OFFERING/ANTHEM***Gloria, mvt. I*

John Rutter

**\*CLOSING HYMN***Joy to the World*

#132

**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 world! the Savior reigns; Let men their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**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.**

**\*BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE** *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* arr. Frackenpohl  
**Brass Quintet:** Gianluca Farina, trumpet; Ben Hauser, trumpet; Hugo Bliss, horn; Brad Williams, trombone; Nate Seman, tuba; Matt Kibort, percussion

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ SUNDAY, December 17, 2023**

Celebrate with us after the 11 a.m. worship on **Sunday, December 17**, at our **Cookie Extravaganza**. Hope to see you there!

Stewardship 2024: **I'm so excited ~ so close to our goal!!** We continue to give thanks to everyone who has turned in their intention of giving pledge card for 2024. Currently we have received intention of giving/pledge cards for \$524,950 Our goal for the 2024 budget is \$527,000 ~ a difference of \$2050. **We are almost there!** You can help us continue to live our values, offering worship, and sharing God's love in this world. We are grateful for your continued support of our shared mission and ministry.

**Christmas Eve** All services in the Sanctuary with candlelight and beloved carols!  
Please note: **NO Service in the morning on Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup>**

**4:00 p.m. ~ Pre-service music begins at 3:45 p.m.** 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. Pastor Wes will preach on Luke 2. We will celebrate **communion** together. All are welcome to come and behold God's radiant beam of love.

**7:00 p.m. ~ Pre-service music at 6:40 p.m.** with guest musicians **Natalie Helm**, cellist; **Meghan Jones**, violinist; and **Phoebe Powell**, harpist. 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. Pastor Wes will preach on Luke 2. We especially encourage all who have family visiting to this service. **THIS SERVICE WILL BE LIVESTREAMED.**

**11:00 p.m. ~ Arrive early at 10:40 p.m.** to hear the beautiful pre-service music of cello, violin, harp, and organ. Featured guest musicians **Natalie Helm**, **Meghan Jones**, and **Phoebe Powell**. Pastor Wes will preach on Luke 2. **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.

**New Year's Eve ~ December 31 ~ ONE service at 11 a.m.** We will end 2023 worshipping the One who is the Creator, Author, and Conductor of life. We will honor Kwanzaa. All are welcome to come with prayers and praise on the cusp of 2024

**NEW Year ~ NEW Worship experience.** Beginning on **January 7<sup>th</sup> the 9 a.m.** worship service will move to **8:45 a.m. in the chapel.** This new service will allow interaction and an intimate setting. If you have questions, please see Pastor Wes

**The Wayless Way ~ Your Life as a Curriculum ~ NEW offering for 2024 ~** As we begin a New Year, we will launch twice monthly conversations centering around a book with Pastor Wes weaving insights from scripture and inspiration. You do not need to attend all the sessions, but there will be a thread that will run from session to session. In January, we will focus on *Build the Life You Want* by Arthur C. Brooks and Oprah Winfrey (January 8 and 29). In February, *Hope Leans Forward* by Valerie Brown (February 12 and 26). In March, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri Nouwen (March 11 and 25). In April, *No Cure for Being Human* by Kate Bowler (April 8 and 22). *The Seventh Story Podcasts* by Brian McLaren (May 13). On each of the Mondays above, we will gather at 4 p.m. and finish by 5:15 p.m. For more information, specific reading plan, and to register for the conversation, please contact Pastor Wes. The event will be hybrid (in the Oasis and Zoom).

To ring in the New Year on **Tuesday, January 2, 2024**, the UCC Women's Association will host Bohdana Puzyk and Katia Shevchuk from the **Ukrainian National Women's League of America** (UNWLA). Come to Fellowship Hall at 11:30 and enjoy lunch (\$12), followed by the program. The ladies from Ukraine will display show-and-tell items including embroidery and handmade Ukrainian Easter Eggs. They will also tell us about the traditions of Ukrainian Christmas. **All are welcome.** Please sign up to attend after Sunday worship or call the church office at 941-953-7044.

**Sacred Conversations on Race** continues **January 10<sup>th</sup> at 3 p.m.:** we will watch a sermon by General Minister of the UCC, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, given at the Florida Conference UCC Annual Meeting. On **January 24<sup>th</sup>** we will read and discuss, Toni Morrison's *Recitatif*. Please note, if you read the Morrison book, you need to **skip** the introduction, read the story first between two women – one black and one white – which Morrison doesn't specify in the story the race of each woman. After you experience the story, you can read the introduction for Morrison's insights into race. All are welcome! You can join either in person in the **Oasis Center** or on **Zoom**. Please see Jim Crumel for more information.

### **CALENDAR**

#### **Sunday, December 17 ~ Choir Celebration Sunday ~ Both Services**

Sunday Worship, 9 a.m., Sanctuary

Sunday Worship, 11 a.m., in Sanctuary and online

Fellowship, noon, Syster Hall ~ Cookie Extravaganza!!

#### **Tuesday, December 19**

Drumming as a Spiritual Practice, 3 p.m., Chapel

Tuesday Night Bible Study, 6:30 p.m., Zoom

#### **Wednesday, December 20**

Wednesday Morning Bible Study, 11 a.m., Oasis Center and Zoom  
Church Choir, 7 p.m., Chapel

**Sunday, December 24, Christmas Eve ~ All Services feature Candlelight**

NO morning service

**4 p.m.** Christmas Eve Service with communion

**7 p.m.** Christmas Eve Service with choir and children process creche

**11 p.m.** Christmas Eve Service with choir and communion

**90+ Wise Birthdays ~ December ~ Please help us shower with cards:**

Dotty Pickett ~ 12/6

Clara Menchinger ~ 12/20

Patricia McCloskey ~ 12/31

Ellie White ~ 12/31

**Upcoming Celebrations of Life:**

**Ms. Lovette W. Harper** ~ Saturday, January 6 at 11 am ~ Sanctuary

**Wes Curry** ~ Saturday, January 20 at 2 pm ~ Sanctuary

**First Congregational United Church of Christ**

*Phone:* (941)953-7044    *Our website:* [www.uccsarasota.com](http://www.uccsarasota.com)

*We are a **Creation Justice; Open & Affirming; and Racial Justice***  
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