

CHRISTMAS EVE 2023
7 P.M.



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC ~ SARASOTA
WWW.UCCSARASOTA.COM

December 24, 2023

Christmas Eve

7 P.M.

PRELUDES: Meghan Jones, violin; Natalie Helm, cello; and Phoebe Powell, harp

ANTHEM

Love's Pure Light

Elaine Hagenberg

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**

Holy One, as the words of the hymn echo around the sanctuary and reverberate in our souls, we give thanks that You call *all* to come to the manger. Whether our faith is strong or the wi-fi signal of our soul is off-line, You warmly welcome everyone as Your beloved. We pray through carols, scripture, and candlelight that we would be wrapped up in the mystery and marvel of tonight. We long to linger and live in the sacredness of this night; for we need Your presence every day. Remind us anew of the truth that You enter our lives even when things are not perfectly polished. You search amid the cobwebs and chaos for a manger-size place which is *already* in each of us. Help us uncover and discover You with us here and now. As we join the 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 He 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

Angels' Carol

John Rutter

BEHOLDING GOD'S GLORY

Luke 1:8-19

Alex Mitchell

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

them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

ANTHEM *Still, Still, Still* Mack Wilberg

SERMON *Open the Door*

SOLO *O Holy Night* Adolphe Adams
Lauren Patsos, Soprano

*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.

*LITANY of ADORATION

One: From the familiar words of scripture to singing drenched in candlelight, we once again shared the sacredness of this night.

Many: **And our hearts have turned toward and tuned into the soft melody of God's hope and peace.**

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

One: As our souls feel their worth, we stand in awe of God's beautifully messy way of entering this world,

Many: **Our holy hymn grows louder because we cannot contain the truth of love and joy inside this building.**

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

One: So sing out with a full voice for all Sarasota to hear that will continue to echo into a brand-new year.

Many: **For God so loves the world, God enters to reside in our hearts in such a time as this. Alleluia and Amen.**

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

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

Felix Mendelssohn

Greeters: Lucy Hedrick, George Handley, Rich Rescigno, John Ristow
Ushers: Lucy Hedrick, George Handley, Pauline Geary, Dick Miller, and
John Ristow.
Liturgists: Olivia Bixby and Alex Mitchell

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

STAFF: Dr. Rev. Wes Bixby, Pastor: wdbixby@yahoo.com
Gregory Chestnut, Minister of Music: gchest@aol.com
Sherry Glover, Office Admin: admin@uccsarasota.com
Douglas Kingsley, Tech: mediaspecialist@uccsarasota.com
Pam Gansch-Boythe, Bookkeeper: finances@uccsarasota.com
Heidie Heath, Financial Clerk: finances@uccsarasota.com
Mark Swain, Campus Manager

OFFICERS: Moderator: Nancy Morris
Vice Moderator: Harold Mezile
Past Moderator: Jim Butterworth
Co-Treasurer: Robin Reich
Co-Treasurer: Dale Woodling
Secretary: Lynne Woodman

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

Please join us for Worship Sunday Mornings
8:45 a.m. in the Chapel
11 a.m. in the Sanctuary and Livestreamed
(Please note: One service on December 31 at 11 a.m.)

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, Greg Chestnut, Heidie Heath, Pamela Gansch-Boythe, Sherry Glover, Douglas Kingsley, & Mark Swain

The Wayless Way Book Club ~ 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 sessions 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 Podcast* by Brian McLaren (May 13). On each of the Mondays above, we will gather at 4 pm and finish by 5:15 pm. 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).

Dr. Keith Hampton, Composer, Organist, and Conductor will be Artist in Residence for Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. weekend. **Friday evening, January 12, at 7:00, FREE concert** in our sanctuary. Dr. Hampton will celebrate the 30th Anniversary of our Jaeckel pipe organ by playing several concert works. He will engage the audience in singing spirituals. You will not want to miss this night of soul- stirring music! **Sunday, January 14**, Dr. Hampton will help to lead our worship services with Pastor Wes and our own choir as we honor Rev. Dr. King Jr. Keith "Doc" Hampton is the Artistic Director/Founder of one of Chicago's largest and most diverse choral organizations, The Chicago Community Chorus. He is an organist, conductor, composer, educator, church musician, adjudicator, and clinician. He is Director of Music and Organist at Saint Thomas Episcopal Church and Assistant Director of Music at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago.