



CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
30 N. CLINTON ST.
IOWA CITY, IA 52245
30 319-337-4301

WORSHIP FOR JANUARY 4, 2026
EPIPHANY SUNDAY

Today is a communion Sunday. If you are joining us online, you are invited to get whatever you eat and whatever you drink before the beginning of worship. It can be bread and grape juice or wine or as simple as a cracker or rice cake and water for use in our worship.

“We cannot make disappointments, sadness, loss, or winter go away. But we can say ‘Now I begin!’ Today I will let the light of faith shine on my dark morning. Today I will look for signs of spring among the dead leaves of another year. Today I will take the path before me where Christ has gone ahead to clear the way. Today, I will look for the miracle that will change the impossible situation into the birthplace of joy. Today I will be grateful for what I have instead of bitter about what I have lost. Today I will laugh. Today I begin again.”

Tim Haut

PRELUDE “Prélude sur l’Introït de l’Épiphanie”

Maurice Duruflé

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sue Dayton, Liturgist

***CONGREGATIONAL INTROIT (Please Join In)**

**Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great desire of nations;
You have seen His natal star:
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ the newborn King!**

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

We enter into the New Year still on a journey day by day.

With all who search we say:

**“To discover how to be human now
is the reason we follow this star.”**

Let us worship God.

*** HYMN 56 “The First Nowell” (verses 1-5; sing refrain after verses 1, 3, & 5)**

**The first Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.**

Refrain:

**Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel.**

**They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the east beyond them far,
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and night.**

**And by the light of that same star,
Three wise men came from country far;
To seek for a King was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went. [Refrain]**

**This star drew nigh to the northwest;
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
And there it did both stop and stay,
Right over the place where Jesus lay.**

**Then entered in those wise men three,
Full reverently upon the knee,
And offered there, in His presence,
Their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. [Refrain]**

***OPENING PRAYER**

God of splendor and majesty, let your light permeate our lives. We become discouraged by the shadows we encounter in the world and in ourselves. Yet into this troubled world you came to dwell in our midst. Let your bright star light our way through the coming days. May our lives shine with your love. Let us, like the magi, follow the light as it falls on the simple yet extraordinary places of our world. Let it lead us to find new paths of healing and restoration as we discover again our sense of discipleship. Amen.

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#411, vs. 1)

**Arise, your light has come!
The Spirit's call obey;
show forth the glory of your God
which shines on you today.**

SOLO "Go, Tell It on the Mountain"
 Kelly Brown, flute

SERVICE OF GIVING

Invitation

Offertory "As with Gladness Those of Old" Henry Markworth

*Response

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Christ, all creatures here below,
Praise Holy Spirit evermore;
Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.**

*Prayer of Dedication

[There is no Children's Church this morning. Children are invited to stay with their families. Nursery care is available for the younger children.]

SCRIPTURE LESSON Matthew 2:1-12

PSALM 72:1-13

Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the king's heir;

**to rule your people righteously
and the poor with justice;**

that the mountains may bring prosperity to the people,
and the little hills bring righteousness.

**He shall defend the needy among the people
and shall rescue the poor and crush the oppressor.**

He shall live as long as the sun and moon endure,
from one generation to another.

**He shall come down like rain upon the mown field,
like showers that water the earth.**

In his time shall the righteous flourish;
there shall be abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.

**The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall pay tribute,
and the rulers of Arabia and Saba offer gifts.**

All kings shall bow down before him,
and all the nations do him service.

**For he shall deliver the poor who cries out in distress,
and the oppressed who has no helper.**

[Unison]

**He shall have pity on the lowly and poor
and shall preserve the lives of the needy.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON Matthew 2:13-15

SERMON

“The Reason We Follow”

THE LORD’S SUPPER

INVITATION

HYMN 506 “Deck Yourself, My Soul with Gladness”

**Deck yourself, my soul, with gladness,
Leave behind all gloom and sadness;
Come into the daylight’s splendor,
There with joy your praises render
Unto God, Whose grace unbounded
Has this wondrous banquet founded;
Come, for now the Lord most holy
Stoops to you in likeness lowly.**

**Sun, who all my life does brighten;
Light, who does my soul enlighten;
Joy, your wondrous gift bestowing;
Fount, from which all good is flowing;
At Your feet I cry, my Maker,
Let me be a fit partaker
Of this blessed food from heaven,
For our good, Your glory given.**

**Jesus, source of Life and pleasure,
Truest friend and dearest treasure,
By Your love I am invited,
Be Your love with love requited.
From this banquet let me measure,
Lord, how vast and deep its treasure;
Through the gifts that here You give me
As Your guest in heaven receive me.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD’S PRAYER

REMEMBERING AND GIVING THANKS

Now, we remember Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.
He took his place among us as one with human frailty.

We remember that he called disciples and ministered to all.

He confounded the haughty and gave hope to the poor.

He ate with sinners and fed the multitude.

On the night of his arrest...

SHARING OF ELEMENTS

(Communion elements are served in the pews. Please receive the bread or cup as they are offered to you by a deacon. Hold it until all have been served, and we will eat and drink together at the pastor’s guidance. We serve grape juice, not wine. Gluten-free wafers are on the trays with the bread. In the Congregational United Church of Christ, we celebrate the Lord’s Supper with openness and welcome. Everyone is invited to the table, regardless of church membership or denominational affiliation.)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

**O God, who in Jesus called us out of shadows
into wondrous light,
may we always declare your merciful deeds.
Give us courage and conviction,
that we may turn and follow you,
led by the light that shines
through Jesus Christ. Amen.**

*HYMN (insert) Hark the Herald Angels Sing (Jesus the Light of the World)

**Hark! the herald angels sing,
Jesus, the Light of the world;
glory to the newborn King,
Jesus, the Light of the world.**

Refrain:

**We'll walk in the light, beautiful light;
come where the dewdrops of mercy are bright,
shine all around us by day and by night,
Jesus, the Light of the world.**

**Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Jesus, the Light of the world;
join the triumph of the skies,
Jesus, the Light of the world. [Refrain]**

**Christ, by highest heav'n adored,
Jesus, the Light of the world;
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Jesus, the Light of the world. [Refrain]**

**Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace!
Jesus, the Light of the world.
hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Jesus, the Light of the world. [Refrain]**

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE "O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright" Johann Christoph Bach

Call to Worship: Quote from *For the Time Being* by W. H. Auden.

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Minister:	The Rev. Bill Lovin
Director of Christian Education:	Hope Spragg
Organist:	Bill Crouch
Choir Director	Dr. Chris Nakielski
Children's Choir Director	Rachel Burchett
Office Manager	Jenn Harden

TODAY—EPIPHANY SUNDAY

- ❖ No Christian Education
- Worship Service 10:15 am
- Coffee Hour After worship

TUESDAY

- ❖ Gentle Yoga Noon
- Board of Christian Education 6:00 pm
- Mission Board 7:00 pm

WEDNESDAY

- ❖ Staff Meeting 11:00 am

THURSDAY

- ❖ Prairie Piffari Rehearsal 6:30 pm

NEXT SUNDAY

- ❖ Choir Rehearsal 9:00 am
- Christian Education for All Ages 9:15 am
- Worship Service 10:15 am\
- Coffee Hour After Worship
- Confirmation Class 4:00 pm

WE'RE GLAD THAT YOU HAVE JOINED US FOR WORSHIP THIS MORNING. Everyone is invited to Coffee Hour in Rockwood Hall after worship.

WE HAVE RECEIVED OVER \$1600 SO FAR FOR THE UCC CHRISTMAS FUND. We appreciate all of your generous contributions for this important supplement to pensions and health premiums for both clergy and laity, and emergency assistance to the families of those currently working in churches. There is still time to add to this total by using the envelopes in the pews or marking your check with Christmas Fund in the memo line. Thank you for donations.

TODAY IS EPIPHANY SUNDAY. Epiphany, marking the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles and the coming of the Magi, always falls on January 6, 12 days after Christmas. We are celebrating this morning, bringing our observance of Christmas to a conclusion and hearing the story of the Magi from the Gospel of Matthew. We will also share in the sacrament of communion.

HOLY ENVY: Starting Saturday, January 10, the Women's Reading Group will be reading and discussing *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others* by Barbara Brown Taylor. We'll meet from 10-11am in Rockwood Hall the second Saturday of each month through June. If you're interested, contact Marsha Lowe or Rebecca Weatherford or sign-up in Rockwood Hall.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FOR ALL AGES WILL RESUME NEXT SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, AT 9:15 A.M.

OUR MISSION BOARD IS SPONSORING SIX WEEKS OF THE ADULT FORUM FROM JANUARY 11 THROUGH FEBRUARY 22, EXPLORING LOCAL IMMIGRATION ISSUES. Our scheduled speakers are:

- January 11: Mazahir Salih, Immigrant Welcome Network
- January 18: Jerilyn McCarty

- January 25: Stella and Brahm Elias, University of Iowa School of Law
- February 1: Sheriff Brad Kunkel
- February 8: Deb Dunkase, Open Heartland
- February 15: Alejandra Escobar, Escucha Mi Voz
- February 22: Discussion Sunday

This series promises to be informative and interactive, addressing timely and important topics. We hope you will join us.

HOPE LODGE: Our next Hope Lodge dinner will be Monday, January 12. If you would like to contribute to the meal see the signup sheet posted in Rockwood Hall.

ZOOM BIBLE STUDY BEGINS ON JANUARY 14: The winter months provide a great opportunity to meet and study together—all in the comfort of our homes! Join us for a Zoom Bible Study of Paul's Letter to the Galatians. We'll meet on Zoom from 7:00-8:30 p.m. on Wednesday evenings from January 14-February 11. Bill Lovin will lead the study. Because we'll be on Zoom, we expect to see local people and friends from other parts of the world. Let Bill know that you're interested (319-337-4301 or uccicrev@uccic.org) and he'll send you the link.

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST WILL BE HELD AT 11:30 A.M. ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 25, in the sanctuary, following our 10:15 worship service. We will receive reports of Boards and Committees, vote on the budget for 2026, and transact any other business that is fitting and necessary. Copies of the annual report will be available by Sunday, January 11.

OUR MISSION BOARD ANNUAL ALTERNATIVE GIVING FAIR was a great success – due to you: our sellers, buyers, and volunteer church members. Thank you to the generous people who offered their wares: Jo Benda, Robin Chambers, Martha Ann Crawford, Hope Spragg, Roberta Martin, and Kathy Fait. Thank you to Ginny Clemons for her lovely calligraphy on the Heifer cards. And thank you to our volunteers at the tables: Chuck Dayton, Jane Kinney, Linda Muston, Julie Wittig, Rick Chambers, and Matt Spragg. Douglas Herrera, our Sexton, assisted with logistics. We have delivered the toys to the Salvation Army. **The Joan Buxton Mitten Tree** will remain until early January, when we will deliver the warm hats, scarves, and mittens to the School District.

As we wait for the dust to settle, here is a preliminary report from the Fair. We hope to send \$2,660 to the Heifer Project, \$48 to Church World Service, and \$1,159 to the Food Pantry at CommUnity. With All Good Wishes to our Congregation - John and Sharyn Reitz and the Mission Board

SHARING OUR GIFTS TO SHAPE OUR FUTURE: Pledge/estimate of giving cards for 2026 were sent out in early October. If you misplaced yours or did not receive one, please contact the church office—319-337-4301. If you have received a card, please prayerfully fill it out and return it to the church as soon as possible. Your deeply considered, prayerful support will help us to continue our Church's ministry and mission in the Iowa City area and around the world.

CHURCH PHOTO DIRECTORY: Our Membership Board is creating an “in house” photo directory to help everyone put names and faces together. If you have a photo that you would like us to use, please email it to Jenn Harden at uccicadmin@uccic.org. John Johnson will be taking photos after worship this morning.

HELPING OTHER MEMBERS: There are times when a helping hand is needed by a member to get groceries, run an errand, get a ride to an appointment, etc. If you would like to occasionally help out in this way, please see the signup sheet in Rockwood Hall.

GENTLE YOGA on Tuesdays at noon, this 45-minute class is appropriate for beginners, experienced or anyone wishing to focus on body awareness, increased mobility, and restorative practice. The \$10 suggested donation goes directly to the Immigrant Welcome Network. No need to sign-up, you can simply show up!

CYCLING WITHOUT AGE AT THE BIKE LIBRARY offers free e-assisted bike rides originating from the Ashton House and looping through City Park. If you or someone you know would benefit from this "ride through the park" as a passenger, see the sign-up in Rockwood Hall or talk to Hope Spragg to arrange a ride. More info available at: <https://icbikelibrary.org/cycling-without-age!>

CARBON OFFSET HELPS HABITAT FOR HUMANITY: Have you ever wanted to compensate for CO2 emissions from a flight or other carbon intensive activity? Carbon offsets are a recognized way to make an activity carbon neutral. Carbon offsets are also often viewed with skepticism due to concerns about whether the money given is truly decreasing carbon emissions and whether the action would have happened without the donation.

Those concerns can be assuaged with a donation to put solar arrays on Habitat for Humanity homes. The homeowners do not have the resources to make an upfront investment in a solar array and once installed the system is likely to stay in place for the lifetime of the panels. In addition to reducing CO2 emissions the donor would be helping a low income Iowa family with their energy bills.

To estimate your flight emissions and send an offset to Iowa Valley Habitat for Humanity go to www.habitatsolar.org/. Please contact Jamie McCoy or see the bulletin board in Rockwood Hall for more information.

USED MEDICINE BOTTLES NEEDED FOR REUSE IN CLINICS: 100 Grannies, a local environmental activist group, is sending used plastic medicine bottles to Africa to assist clinics in distributing medication. Donna Hirst is in charge of this project and would be pleased to have participation from members of the congregation. If you are interested, Donna can provide a very brief orientation to bottle preparation (donna-hirst@uiowa.edu). Donna will pick up bottles on Sundays.

PLEASE HELP WITH PARKING IN THE CHURCH LOT: Several people currently have mobility issues and need to park in our small parking lot on Jefferson St. If you are able, please park elsewhere so that the marked and unmarked spaces can be used by those who need them. Thanks.

SEE SOMETHING—SAY SOMETHING: If you notice something in the building that needs attention—a leaky faucet, a loose railing, etc.—please let the church office (319-337-4301) know right away. Thanks.

USHERS, GREETERS, AND HOSPITALITY OPPORTUNITIES: There are still some opportunities to greet people coming to worship, to usher, and to provide hospitality during coffee hour after worship. Please sign up on the sheets in Rockwood Hall or call the church office--319-337-4031.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SERVE AS A LITURGIST ON SUNDAY MORNING? This is a great opportunity to welcome people and to lead them in worship. Bill Lovin provides the material. You provide the spirit. Contact Bill if you are interested or would like more information.



Want to give online? Scan the QR code for our giving app.
Your giving makes a world of difference.

WE LIVE STREAM OUR WORSHIP SERVICES AT 10:15 ON SUNDAY MORNING. You can join us online in real time at <https://vimeo.com/event/1424751>. This streaming address is the same each week.

RECORDINGS OF THE WORSHIP SERVICES are posted after worship on Sunday at <https://vimeo.com/channels/1547852>. The recordings remain up permanently, so you can watch past worship services at your convenience or recommend them to a friend.