



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

WORSHIP FOR DECEMBER 21, 2025
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

“Believing is not something as special and difficult or even unnatural as we often suppose. Believing means that what we listen to, we listen to as God’s speech. What moves us is not just our own concern, but precisely God’s concern. What causes me worry, that is God’s worry, what gives me joy is God’s joy, what I hope for is God’s hope.”

Karl Barth

PRELUDE “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence”

Stephen Weber

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Robin Chambers, Liturgist

CHORAL INTROIT

LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE

Chris and Amy Lewis, Ella, Lily, Oscar, and Malia

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Let us wake to the dawn of this day and
the light coming into our lives.

Let us rejoice, for God is coming among us.

[Unison]

Let us worship God.

***HYMN 38 "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"**

**It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold;
"Peace on the earth, good will to all,
From heaven's all gracious King":
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.**

**Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.**

**And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing;
O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing.**

**For lo, the days are hastening on,
By prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever circling years
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing.**

***OPENING PRAYER**

In the quiet of this new morning, O God, help us to find the peace of this season despite our preoccupations. God of compassion, we come to you with our sorrow as well as our joy, for you bear our pain. In these days of preparation, let us watch in hope and confidence, remembering no one is lost to you.

**We bring before you our disappointment and our regret; forgive us and heal us.
May we know the Christ to whom all are dear and welcome those who need your comfort.
Help us to see your light in the darkness.
Help us to sense your presence among us.
Bring peace to our troubled world. Amen.**

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#44, vs. 3 & 4)**

**How silently, how silently, The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts The blessings of his heaven.**

No ear may hear his coming, But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still, The dear Christ enters in.

**O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in, Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell:
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel!**

ANTHEM “Lift Up Your Heads” Peter Niedmann

TIME OF PRAYER

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer

The Prayer of Our Savior

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.

Choral Response

SERVICE OF GIVING

Invitation

Offertory “Lo, How a Rose Is Growing” Paul Manz

*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

SCRIPTURE LESSON Isaiah 64:1-9

PSALM 80

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us.**

Restore us, O God of hosts;
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

**O Lord God of hosts,
how long will you be angered
despite the prayers of your people?**

You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

**You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

Restore us, O God of hosts;
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

**Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one you have made so strong for yourself.**

And so will we never turn away from you;
give us life, that we may call upon your name.

**Restore us, O Lord God of hosts;
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON Luke 1:46-55

SERMON “The Weary World Rejoices”

*HYMN 23 “Angels We Have Heard on High”

**Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.**

Refrain:

**Gloria, in excelsis Deo;
Gloria, in excelsis Deo.**

**Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly song?**

**Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.**

BENEDICTION AND CHORAL RESPONSE

POSTLUDE “Fanfare on *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*” Robert A. Hobby

Cover graphic used with the kind permission of the artist, Lydia Ruffin.

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

❖ Choir Rehearsal	9:00 am
Church School for all ages	9:15 am
Worship Service	10:15 am
Christmas Caroling	2:00 pm

TUESDAY

❖ Gentle Yoga	Noon
Diaconate	7:00 pm
Trustees	7:00 pm

WEDNESDAY

❖ Christmas Eve Worship Service	5:30 pm
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NEXT SUNDAY—THE FOURTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

❖ Worship Service

10:15 am

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

EACH YEAR BRINGS FESTIVITY AND CELEBRATION AS WE MOVE THROUGH ADVENT

toward the joy of Christmas. Mark your calendars so that you can be a part of these special events:

December 21—Fourth Sunday of Advent; Worship at 10:15 a.m.; Christmas caroling 2-4

Christmas Eve is Wednesday, December 24—Christmas Eve candlelight worship service at 5:30 p.m.;

Christmas Fund Offering; Gala reception follows.

December 25—Christmas Day; Church office closed Dec. 25 & 26.

December 28—Fourth Day of Christmas—Worship at 10:15 a.m.

January 4—Epiphany Sunday; Communion

CHRISTMAS CAROLING THIS AFTERNOON, from 2-4! Join us for an intergenerational caroling experience.

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP ON CHRISTMAS EVE, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24, AT 5:30 P.M.: This is a service for people of all ages. Our worship includes a time for children, special music, Christmas carols, a reading of the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke, and lighting of candles. If you would like to be an usher for this worship service, please sign up in Rockwood Hall or call the church office. Everyone is invited to the gala reception in Rockwood Hall after worship. This is a warm and wonderful time of fellowship and a chance to catch up with students and friends who are home for the holidays. Members and friends may provide poinsettias for the sanctuary for our Christmas Eve worship service.

A NOTE FROM THE DIACONATE—SHARE COOKIES ON CHRISTMAS EVE: Please join the traditional cookie brigade on December 24. If you are able and willing to bring two dozen cookies, there will be plenty of mounded plates for filling the tables after our Christmas Eve Candle Light Worship Service. You can bring the cookies on Christmas Eve or earlier in the week. We'll have a special Christmas punch ready for everyone.

CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING—CHRISTMAS EVE: Each year, the United Church of Christ's Christmas Fund Offering allows the UCC to assist retired pastors living on limited incomes as well as to supplement small retirement annuities and health premiums and to provide emergency grants to active and retired clergy and lay employees. The mission of the Christmas Fund is to provide assistance dollars in situations of critical need, while preserving the dignity of those who receive the aid. We will receive the Christmas Fund Offering during our worship on Christmas Eve. Please remember that your generous contributions can and do make a difference in the lives of many people.

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 ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, AT 9:15 A.M.

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.

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.

SHARE THE HARVEST UPDATE: Summer and fall are past. The snow in November covered the final kale crop and meant the end of the harvest. \$1300 was sent to the CommUnity Crisis Center Food Pantry from the proceeds of the sale of produce and flowers. Thanks to John Fuller and Kathy Fait for coordinating this effort, for others who also brought flowers and produce from their gardens and for all who made purchases.

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.

SOME MEMBERS AND FRIENDS ARE STILL INTERESTED IN PROVIDING A MEAL FOR TORIE AND NATHAN after the birth of their daughter. If you'd like to do so, you can sign up on the Meal Train site at <https://www.mealtrain.com/trains/vd120w>. As you can see on the meal train, for those who do not want to cook, they are also happy to receive gift cards for various restaurants. Nathan and Torie thank everyone who has delivered a meal.

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.

IN RESPONSE TO THE RECENT SUSPENSION OF SNAP BENEFITS, THE MISSION BOARD DONATED OVER \$14,000 to three area food pantries to support those affected. This support was made possible through several sources: the current Congregational Appeal for Food Relief; the Operating Budget Mission Board Discretionary Account (funded through your pledges, giving estimates, and other budget donations); and money from Special Funds, given by individuals in the past to help with present needs. We are deeply grateful for your generosity and continued commitment to caring for our community. Your support allows us to respond in meaningful ways when our community faces hardship and to share Christ's love through action.

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! The next three Tuesdays will follow Advent themes of peace, joy and love! There will not be yoga Tuesday, Dec.30, and we'll resume on Tuesday, Jan. 6.

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.