



Christmas Eve Morning

Worship Service

Fourth Sunday of Advent

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

WORSHIP FOR DECEMBER 24, 2023
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRELUDE “In Quiet Joy,” Op. 28, No. 41 Marcel Dupré

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Marsha Lowe, Liturgist

CHORAL INTROIT

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES Jason Beerends, Jeanna Otto, Hayden,
Dylan, & Colin

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

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

Let us watch for the signs of God’s realm

breaking into the life of our world.
We are led to the light of the manger
and to carry that light in the world.
On this Christmas Eve morning
let us rejoice in the freshness of this day.

*HYMN 20 “Watchman, Tell Us of the Night”
North Side: “Watchman...”
South Side: “Traveler...”

**Watchman, tell us of the night,
What its signs of promise are.
Traveler, o'er yon mountain's height,
See that glory-beaming star.
Watchman, does its beauteous ray
Aught of joy or hope foretell?
Traveler, yes; it brings the day,
Promised day of Israel.**

**Watchman, tell us of the night;
Higher yet that star ascends.
Traveler, blessedness and light,
Peace and truth its course portends.
Watchman, will its beams alone
Gild the spot that gave them birth?
Traveler, ages are its own;
See, it bursts o'er all the earth.**

**Watchman, tell us of the night,
For the morning seems to dawn.
Traveler, darkness takes its flight,
Doubt and terror are withdrawn.
Watchman, let thy wanderings cease;
Hasten to your quiet home.
Traveler, lo! the Prince of Peace,
Lo! the Son of God is come!**

*OPENING PRAYER

In the quiet of this new morning, O God, help us find the peace of this season despite our preoccupations. On this day of celebration among friends and family may we cherish the bonds we share.

Help us to see your light in the darkness.

Help us to hear your voice of hope.

Please bring peace to our troubled world. Amen.

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#44, vs. 4)

**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 “Joy to the World” Hugo Gehrke

*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

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

(The children are dismissed to Children’s Church)

SCRIPTURE LESSON Isaiah 58:6-9a

PSALM 108:1-6

My heart is firmly fixed, O God, my heart is fixed;

I will sing and make melody.

Wake up, my spirit;

awake, lute and harp;

I myself will waken the dawn.

I will confess you among the peoples, O Lord;

I will sing praises to you among the nations.

**For your loving-kindness is greater than the heavens,
and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.**

Exalt yourself above the heavens, O God,
and your glory over all the earth.

**So that those who are dear to you may be delivered,
save with your right hand and answer me.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON Luke 1:26-38

SERMON “The Morning Seems to Dawn”

*ADVENT CREDO-- Allan Boesak

It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction rule forever—

This is true: Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, his name shall be called wonderful councilor, mighty God, the Everlasting, the Prince of peace.

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church before we can be peacemakers—

This is true: I will pour out my spirit on all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young shall see visions and your old shall have dreams.

So we leave Advent in hope, even hope against hope. Let us see visions of love and peace and justice.

Let us affirm with humility, with joy, with faith, with courage: Jesus Christ—the life of the world.

*HYMN 31 “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” (vs. 1 & 3)

**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!"**

Refrain:

**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 we no more may die.
Born to raise us from the earth,
Born to give us second birth.**

*BENEDICTION AND CHORAL RESPONSE

POSTLUDE “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice” Paul Laubengayer

“Advent Credo” by Allan Boesak-- Allan Boesak (born 1946) is a South African pastor in the Dutch Reformed Church, politician, anti-apartheid activist, and author of fifteen books. This poem is taken from his book *Walking on Thorns* (Eerdmans, 1984).

Minister:	The Rev. Bill Lovin
Director of Children’s Programs:	The Rev. Ann Molsberry
Organist:	Bill Crouch
Choir Director	Dr. Chris Nakielski
Children’s Choir Director	Majesty Constable
Office Manager	Jenn Harden

TODAY—FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

- ❖ Choir Rehearsal 9:00 am
- ❖ No Christian Education
- ❖ Worship Service 10:15 am
- ❖ CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICE 5:30 pm

MONDAY through WEDNESDAY

- ❖ Church Office Closed

NEXT SUNDAY—NEW YEAR’S EVE

- ❖ 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.

The Staff of Congregational UCC wishes all of you a Merry Christmas and we thank you for your support over the past year.

OUR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS OBSERVANCES AND CELEBRATIONS renew some of our traditional activities and events and bring new possibilities as well. Here are some important dates:

December 24—Fourth Sunday of Advent; Worship at 10:15

Christmas Eve is Sunday, December 24—Worship at 5:30 p.m.; Gala Reception follows in Rockwood Hall

January 7—Epiphany Sunday; Communion

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICE

Candlelight and Carols tonight at 5:30 p.m. Please join us for this worship service for people of all ages. This will include a special time for children, music by the choir, 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. The reception will be even better if you bring some cookies or other goodies to share.

The church office will be will be closed on Monday through Wednesday, December 25-27, in celebration of Christmas and on Monday, January 1, in celebration of New Year's Day.

Next Sunday, December 31, our worship will be at the usual time, 10:15 a.m. A festive New Year's Eve worship service is planned. Bill Lovin will be preaching. There will be no church school classes. Christian Education for all ages will resume on Sunday, January 7, 2024.

Celebrate Epiphany (the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles, the coming of the Magi) with us on Sunday, January 7, 2024. In our 10:15 worship service we will bring our observance of Christmas to a conclusion, hearing the story of the Magi from the Gospel of Matthew. We will also share in the sacrament of communion.

THE CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING

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 5:30 p.m. worship tonight. Please remember that your generous contributions can and do make a difference in the lives of many people.

THE MORAVIAN STAR was given to Congregational UCC by the Williamson family. They came to Iowa City from Wisconsin and their family ancestry was Moravian. The Moravian Church took shape during the late 14th century, before the Protestant reforms of Martin Luther and John Calvin, following the simple religious practices of Jan Hus. The Moravian Star originated in Germany in the 1830s as a craft project to teach geometry and was quickly adopted by the Moravian Church as a symbol of the birth of Jesus, hanging in churches from the first Sunday of Advent until Epiphany, January 6. Our star has the traditional 26 points, although some can have up to 100. Each year John Johnson makes sure that it hangs at the front of our sanctuary for the Christmas pageant and through the 12 days of Christmas.

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.

YOUR CHURCH NOMINATING COMMITTEE is looking for stalwart and generous members to fill remaining board slots. This means we're looking for you. We still have room on the diaconate, membership, trustees, and stewardship committees. Please contact either Andrea Rauer or Megan Carnes, if you'd like to volunteer. Andrea Rauer: amrauer@gmail.com
Megan Carnes: carnesmegan@yahoo.com

BLESSING BAGS: Sunday School students are collecting **NEW single-use personal care/hygiene products** for their January mission and outreach project: Epiphany Blessing Bags. Please contribute to this effort: toothpaste and toothbrush, hairbrush and comb, hand sanitizer, hand wipes, bars of soap, shampoo and conditioner, hand lotion, and Band-Aids. This is a perfect solution for distributing those hotel-sized products that are gathering dust in your bathroom drawers!! Please put these items in the brown baskets found in the Children's Corner. In addition, the students will be adding cash, breakfast bars, socks, and gloves to the Blessing Bags...so monetary gifts marked "Blessing Bags" can also be placed in the Offering plate on Sunday.

OPEN HEARTLAND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY: Open Heartland, an organization meeting a variety of needs of the Spanish speaking population of Iowa City, is seeking volunteers. Our youth are going to be involved, and this is an opportunity for adults in our congregation as well. Volunteer times and activities of sorting donations, packaging bulk foods and other needs are varied and flexible. If you are interested, contact Deb Dunkhase, the director, at debdkhase@gmail.com or call or text her at 319-321-5528. Or for a little more information, ask /Ray Muston or Jane Kinney about the organization.

HOPE LODGE: Our next Hope Lodge dinner will be Monday, January 15. If you would like to provide food, see the sign-up sheet in Rockwood Hall. As always, any congregation members are welcome to be there to visit with the Hope Lodge residents.

DO YOU HAVE A CHURCH KEY? We have made new keys and are working at getting a better list of people who have keys. If you have a key to the church, please contact Trustee Chairperson, Kevin Richards, at (608) 807-7195 or at kdrichards1958@gmail.com. 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 or Trustee Chairperson, Kevin Richards, know right away. You can reach Kevin at (608) 807-7195 or at kdrichards1958@gmail.com. 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/154m7852>. The recordings remain up permanently, so you can watch past worship services at your convenience or recommend them to a friend.