



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

WORSHIP FOR DECEMBER 24, 2026
CHRISTMAS EVE

PRELUDE “Of the Father's Love Begotten” Wilbur Held

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT

LIGHTING OF THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE

Kyle Flippo and Rachel Slezak, Art Flippo and Lev Slezak

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, all who long for God.

**There is good news of great joy!
God is not far from us
but comes to us as a child, this night.**

Come and see what God has done.

**God loves this world of flesh and bone, stone and tree,
sheep and ox, star and field.**

*CAROL 41 “O Come, All Ye Faithful” (vs. 1 & 3)

**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 heaven above!
Glory to God, all
Glory in the highest! [Refrain]**

*OPENING PRAYER

Great God, as you came at night when all was still, so enter our lives this night. You share our humanity and understand the disquiet of our hearts. Abide with us. Lift the burdens of all your people, give peace to your world, bring light out of the darkness, and fill the earth with joy.

May hope and faith be born among us. Renew our sense of wonder. Give us courage in the face of all that troubles us. Help us to hear and to tell the news of your peace and good will among all people; in the name of Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Amen.

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#41)

**Child, for us sinners, poor and in the manger,
we would embrace thee with love and awe;
Word that created, now in flesh appearing!
O come, let us adore him . . .**

A DECREE GOES OUT Bill Lovin

Luke 2:1-5

CAROL 44 “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (vs. 1)

**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.**

SHELTERING IN A STABLE Rachel Burchett
Luke 2:6-7
CAROL 49 “Once in Royal David’s City” (vs. 1 & 2)
**Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her baby
In a manger for His bed.
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.**

**He came down to earth from heaven
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall.
With the poor, oppressed, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Savior holy.**

WATCHING IN THE FIELDS Bea Hicks
Luke 2:8-12
CAROL 59 “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks” (vs. 1 & 2)
**While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around,
And glory shone around.**

**"Fear not!" said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind.
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and humankind,
To you and humankind.**

THE ANGELS PROCLAIM Nathan Peters
Luke 2:13-15
CAROL 23 “Angels We Have Heard on High” (vs. 3)
**Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing.**

**Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.**

**Gloria in excelsis Deo,
gloria in excelsis Deo.**

THE SHEPHERDS ARRIVE AND GLORIFY GOD
Luke 2:16-20

Nadia Spragg

***CAROL 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 hosts 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. [Refrain]**

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

CAROL 52 “Sheep Fast Asleep” (vs. 1)

**Sheep fast asleep there on a hill,
Grass for their bed; all is still.
Cold winter night, the frost appears;
Shepherds keep watch by their fire.
Soft there a sound, far, far away;
Is it the stream? winds at play?
Nay, friend, it is the heavenly choir.
Singing throughout the spheres.**

CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

***CAROL 38 “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” (vs. 1-3)**

**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.**

**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!**

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.

ANTHEM “In the Bleak Midwinter”

SERVICE OF GIVING

Invitation

Offertory “Still, Still, Still” Paul Manz

*Response

**To God, all glorious heav’nly Light,
To Christ revealed in earthly night,
To God the Spirit now we raise
Our joyful songs of thankful praise.**

*Prayer of Dedication

SHARING THE LIGHT

Distribution of the Light

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,
Heavenly 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.**

**Silent night, holy night!
Wondrous star, lend thy light:
With the angels let us sing,
Alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born,
Christ the Savior is born.**

(As the Light is passed, tip unlit candles to receive the flame from lit candles. Please keep lit candles upright to prevent the spilling of hot wax.)

Silent Meditation

Prayer

***CAROL 40 “Joy to the World”**

(Please extinguish your candle as the lights come up.)

**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 earth, the Savior reigns!
Let us our songs employ
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

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 “Joy to the World” David Cherwien

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
Financial Manager	Sharyn Huriaux Reitz

WE ARE GLAD THAT YOU HAVE JOINED US FOR WORSHIP THIS CHRISTMAS EVE. The Staff at Congregational United Church of Christ wishes you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We thank you for your support over the past year.

TONIGHT, WE WILL RECEIVE THE OFFERING FOR THE CHRISTMAS FUND. 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. Please remember that your generous contributions can and do make a difference in the lives of many people.

THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE WILL BE CLOSED on Thursday and Friday, December 25 & 26, in celebration of Christmas and on Thursday, January 1, in celebration of New Year’s Day. Bill Lovin will be on vacation from Christmas through New Year’s Day.

NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28 (the Fourth Day of Christmas), our worship will be at the usual time, 10:15 a.m. The Rev. Libby Conley will be preaching. There will be no church school classes. Christian Education classes for all ages will resume on Sunday, January 11, 2026.

CELEBRATE EPIPHANY (the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles, the coming of the Magi) with us on Sunday, January 4, 2026. 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. Bill Lovin will be preaching.

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.



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.