



Kelly Latimore: "La presentación de Cristo en el templo"

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

WORSHIP FOR DECEMBER 28, 2025
FOURTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

PRELUDE "O, Come, All Ye Faithful" S. Hofland

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chuck Connerly, Liturgist

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Praise God from the heights! The Holy One is transcendent, radiant, and glorious.

Salvation, redemption, and liberation come from above and dwell among us.

Praise God from the earth! Emmanuel is humble, gracious, and near.

Past, present, and future rests in the work of our hands in God's hands.

Praise the name of God! I AM hears our cry, responds to our need, and still speaks to our spirits.

Blessing, honor, and power belong to our God. Praise God!

* HYMN 49 (vs. 1-3) "Once in Royal David's City"

**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.**

**Jesus is our childhood's pattern;
Day by day, like us He grew;
He was little, weak and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us He knew;
And He feels for all our sadness,
And He shares in all our gladness.**

***OPENING PRAYER**

Loving God, we come to you with humble and grateful hearts. We thank you for your love, grace, mercy, and protection which has kept us throughout this year. As we look to 2026, we know that you make all things new. So, we are filled with excitement and anticipation for the fresh start you have provided for us. Open our eyes to your purpose in this new year. Let us seek your wisdom in all things we say and do. Lord, teach us how to truly love and let us live in peace and harmony as we shine the light of Christ into the world so that others we serve in love may also live more towards peace and harmony. Amen

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#49, vs. 4)**

**And our eyes at last shall see Him,
through His own redeeming love;
for that Child so dear and gentle
is our Lord in heav'n above,
and He leads His children on
to the place where He is gone.**

**SOLO "The Holy Boy" John Ireland
 Marie Von Behren**

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.

SERVICE OF GIVING

Invitation

Offertory "Joy to the World" H. 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

[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 Isaiah 63:7-9

PSALM 148

Hallelujah!

Praise the Lord from the heavens;

praise the Lord in the heights.

Praise the Lord, all you holy angels;

praise the Lord, all heavenly host.

Praise the Lord, sun and moon;

praise the Lord, all you shining stars.

Praise the Lord, heaven of heavens,

and you waters above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of the Lord,

who commanded, and they were created.

The Lord made them stand fast forever and ever

and gave them a law which shall not pass away.

Praise the Lord from the earth,

you sea-monsters and all deeps;

fire and hail, snow and fog,

tempestuous wind, obeying God's will;

mountains and all hills,

fruit trees and all cedars;

wild beasts and all cattle,

creeping things and winged birds;

rulers of the earth and all peoples,

leaders and all judges of the world;

young men and women,

old and young together.

Let them praise the name of the Lord,

for the name of the Lord only is exalted,

and the splendor of the Lord is over earth and heaven.

The Lord has raised up strength for the chosen people

and praise for all loyal servants,

the children of Israel, a people who are near to the Lord.

Hallelujah!

SCRIPTURE LESSON II Corinthians 5:16-19

SERMON "Taking Stock"

*HYMN (insert) Canticle of the Turning"

My soul cries out with a joyful shout

That the God of my heart is great

And my spirit sings of the Wondrous things

That you bring to the ones who wait

You fixed your sight on your servant's plight

And my weakness you did not spurn

So from east to west shall my name be blest

Could the world be about to turn?

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring
Let the fires of your justice burn
Wipe away all tears for the dawn draws near
And the world is about to turn!**

**Though I am small, my God, my all, you
Work great things in me
And your mercy will last from the Depths
Of the past to the end of the age to be
Your very name puts the proud to shame
And to those who would for you yearn
You will show your might
Put the strong to flight
For the world is about to turn
My heart shall sing of the day you bring
Let the fires of your justice burn
Wipe away all tears
For the dawn draws near
And the world is about to turn!**

**From the halls of power to the fortress tower
Not a stone will be left on stone
Let the king beware for your
Justice tears ev'ry tyrant from his throne
The hungry poor shall weep no more
For the food they can never ears
There are tables spread, ev'ry
Mouth be fed
For the world is about to turn
My heart shall sing of the day you bring
Let the fires of your justice burn
Wipe away all tears
For the dawn draws near
And the world is about to turn!**

**Though the nations rage from age to age
We remember
Who holds us fast
God's mercy must deliver us from the conqueror's crushing grasp
This saving word that out forebears
Heard is the promise which holds us bound
'Til the spear and rod can be
Crushed by God
Who is turning the world around
My heart shall sing of the day you bring
Let the fires of your justice burn
Wipe away all tears
For the dawn draws near
And the world is about to turn!**

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring
Let the fires of your justice burn**

**Wipe away all tears
For the dawn draws near
And the world is about to turn!**

BENEDICTION AND CHORAL RESPONSE

POSTLUDE “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” H. Gehrke

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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

❖ Worship Service **TODAY**
10:15 am

❖ Church Office Closed—New Year’s Day **THURSDAY**

❖ No Christian Education **NEXT SUNDAY—EPIPHANY SUNDAY**
Worship Service 10:15 am

WE WELCOME THE REV. LIBBY CONLEY back to our pulpit this morning. Libby is an ordained Mennonite minister and a former hospital chaplain. The Rev. Bill Lovin is on vacation through Thursday, January 1. Bill will be preaching on Sunday, January 4.

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

THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO GAVE TO THE CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING ON 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. If you would like to give to this fund this morning, please use the “Christmas Fund” envelopes in the pews or write “Christmas Fund” on your check or electronic giving memo.

EPIPHANY CELEBRATION ON JANUARY 4: Epiphany (the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles, the coming of the Magi) falls twelve days after Christmas, on January 6 each year. We will celebrate Epiphany on

Sunday, January 4. 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 and celebrating 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 ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, AT 9:15 A.M.

OUR MISSION BOARD will sponsor six weeks of the Adult Forum from January 11 through February 22. 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 sign-up 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

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.

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. 28, 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.