



This is all I have known for certain, that God is love.
Even if I have been mistaken about this or that point,
God is nevertheless love.

If I have made a mistake it will be plain enough;
so I repent – and God is love.

God is love – not God was love, nor God will be love, oh no,
even that future is too slow for me – God is love.

~Sören Kierkegaard

We are God's creative works in process.

God alone knows what we shall become.

What might God have in store in the fullness of our time?

In the beginning, God created Light. In Mary, God became flesh.

What will God become in us?

Is there room in us for God's seed to take root and grow?

God has visited us with grace and favor.

Are we ready to become Light?

-Thomas Hoffman

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CHRISTMAS EVE**

December 24, 2016, 7:00 PM
Please silence cell phones

Prelude 6:50 PM

Welcome and Announcements ☩

Nancy Ellett Allison

One: May the peace of the Christ Child be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

*(Please pass the information pads so that all worshippers
might have the opportunity to sign them)*

Welcoming Hope

adaptation of "Amazing Peace"
by Maya Angelou

The Wheat Family

*It is the glad season. . . Hope is born again in the faces of children
It rides on the shoulders of our aged as they walk into their sunsets.
Hope spreads around the earth. Brightening all things. . .
At this Holy Instant, we celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ
Into the great religions of the world.
We jubilate the precious advent of trust.
We shout with glorious tongues at the coming of hope.*

Introit

"St Anne's Christmas Reel"

Bill Englebreth, hammered dulcimer, Judah L. Jones, guitar

Call to Worship

Sydney Brown

One: Holy One, you have come to us.

Many: **You didn't wait for us to become good. You didn't stay away
until we searched for you.**

One: You took the initiative.

Many: **You entered the world as a babe, so that you could enter the
world of our experience and meet us where we are, as we are.**

** All rise in body or spirit ☩ Sing Response ☩ Hymnals located below pews*

One: Returning One, we know that as we worship and pray, you hear, you understand and you answer. Come into our world again.

Many: Bring your peace and love and trust into a world of war and hatred and suspicion.

One: Come into this land again.

Many: Bring your healing into a country ravaged by broken promises, broken communities, broken relationships, and bodies broken by AIDS, cancer, disease, drugs, hatred, racism and greed.

One: Come into your church again.

Many: Bring faith and inspiration into the community that you call to be your loving servant to the world.

One: Come into our lives, and those of our loved ones again.

Many: May we know in the depth of our souls, tonight and always, that you, our Faithful Savior, are truly with us, no matter what life brings.

ALL: With hope we welcome You and Your healing love into our world.

* Carol

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

ADESTES FIDELES

David Smith, trumpet, Bill Tyler, french horn

φ Oh, come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant!
Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, Born the king of angels:
Oh, 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, Glory In the highest:
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given! Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing!
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

* Invocation

Nancy Ellett Allison

One: Living God, we ask in the words of May Sarton that you:

Many: Help us to be the always hopeful Gardeners of the Spirit, who know that without darkness nothing comes to birth, as without light, nothing flowers. May we draw strength in the darkness and so share your hope, peace, and joy in love's infinite light. Amen.

* Carol

"It Came upon a Midnight Clear"

CAROL

ϕ 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!

For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold
When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.

Gift of Music

"Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming"

EST IST EIN' ROS

Jared Fischer, guitar; Claire and Meg Houlihan, vocals

Lighting the Christ Candle

The Shoop Family

One: Hope, peace, love, and joy. Four candles, four promises continually offered to us by God, and all of them manifest in this one we light tonight: the Christ candle. In Christ we find the hope of transformation, the peace that follows justice, the love that encompasses us in all our diversity, and the joy of self-fulfillment in community, empowering us to make our own unique contribution to this world. In Jesus we find light and life, and the courage to be like him, answering his call and following in his footsteps.

All: We rejoice in God's steadfast presence in our lives,
and in God's unique presence in the life of Jesus
of Nazareth—

born of Mary, growing through childhood into an adult
ministry, in all his life manifesting the peace, love, and
justice of God; his voice undimmed by the centuries, his call
and his promise as clear to us as it was to his disciples so long
ago.

Come to us, Lord Jesus, Be born in us this night, in our
hearts, our minds, our lives. May the light of your life be
kindled in us, And lead us to the shining truth, of God with
us, God for us, God in us. Amen. *(All candles are lit.)*

Advent Carol 117 "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates"

TRURO

φ The cloudless Sun of Joy Christ is,
Who bringeth pure delight and bliss.
Whose splendid beams by this are shone:
That God in mortal flesh is known.

Redeemer, come! I open wide
My heart to Thee; here, Christ, abide!
Thy Holy Spirit, guide us on
Until the glorious crown be won.

Children's Offering & Message

Nancy Ellett Allison

*(Following the Children's Message, children below first grade
may go to extended care or return to sit with their parents.)*

Gift of Music

"Grown-up Christmas List"

Micah Baldonado, piano; Yasmine Senturias, soprano

*Do you think peace requires an end to war/
Or tigers eating only vegetables?
Does peace require an absence from your boss, your spouse, yourself?
Do you think peace will come some other place than here?
Some other time than now? In some other heart than yours?
Peace is this moment without judgment. That is all.
This moment in the heart-space where everything that is, is welcome.
Peace is this moment without thinking
that it should be some other way
That you should feel some other thing
That your life should unfold according to your plans.
Peace is this moment without judgment.
This moment in the heart-space where everything that is, is welcome.*

Prayers of the People

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make us instruments of Your peace.

**Where there is hatred, let us sow love;
where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope; where there is sadness, joy;
and where there is darkness, light.**

**Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.**

**For it is in giving that we receive, in pardoning that we are
pardoned, and in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.**

Gift of Music

“Beautiful Star of Bethlehem”

*Lisa Cloninger, Caroline Fischer, David McGuirt, vocals;
Jared Fischer, banjo; Brian Hankins, mandolin*

*I wonder what would happen if
I treated everyone like I was in love
with them, whether I like them or not
and whether they respond or not and no matter
what they say or do to me and even if I see
things in them which are ugly twisted petty
cruel vain deceitful indifferent, just accept
all that and turn my attention to some small
weak tender hidden part and keep my eyes on
that until it shines like a beam of light
like a bonfire I can warm my hands by and trust
it to burn away all the waste which is not
never was my business to meddle with.*

* Carol

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

MENDELSSOHN

David Smith, trumpet, Bill Tyler, french horn

φ **Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the new born 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!”

**Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel. *Refrain***

**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 man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give us second birth. *Refrain***

Offertory

“What Child is This?”

Music Cooperative

* Song of Thanksgiving

“What Can I Offer?”

CRANHAM

φ What can I offer, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.

If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;

Yet what I can, I give him: give my heart.

* Offertory Dedication

Welcoming Joy

“Welcome Morning”

Darline Warren

by Anne Sexton

*There is joy in all: in the hair I brush each morning...
in the chapel of eggs I cook...in the outcry from the kettle...
in the godhead of the table that I set my silver, plate,
cup upon each morning.*

*All this is God, right here in my pea-green house
each morning and I mean, though often forget,
to give thanks, to faint down by the kitchen table
in a prayer of rejoicing as the holy birds at the kitchen window
peck into their marriage of seeds.*

*So while I think of it, let me paint a thank-you on my palm
for this God, this laughter of the morning, lest it go unspoken.
The Joy that isn't shared, I've heard, dies young.*

* Carol

“Joy to the World”

ANTIOCH

φ Joy to the world! The Lord is come; let earth receive her king!
Let every heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing!

Joy to the earth! the savior reigns; let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains 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.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love.

Rejoicing in the Baby's Birth

Luke 2:1-8

Lori Cipot

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered...Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Gift of Music

“The Friendly Beasts”

Music Cooperative

Welcoming the Shepherds

Luke 2:9-14

Barry Holcomb

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!’

Gift of Music

“Ding! Dong! Merrily on High”
Chamber Choir

arr. Mack Wilberg

Ding! dong! merrily on high, In heav'n the bells are ringing!
Ding! dong! verily the sky is riv'n with angel singing!
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

E'en so here below, below, Let steeple bells be swungen,
And "I-o, i-o, i-o!" By priest and people sungen!
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

Pray you, dutifully prime, Your matin chime, ye ringers!
May you beautifully rime, Your evetime song, ye singers!
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

Meditation

Nancy Ellett Allison

Gift of Music

“O Holy Night”

by Adolphe Adam

Jared Fischer, piano; Dorrie Hankins soprano, Margaret Hankins, violin

Sacrament of Holy Communion

(Parents are welcome to bring their children in from Children’s Church to join them in receiving communion.)

Invitation

On this holy night, you are invited to this table of welcome. You are invited to hold the infant Jesus in your arms and cradle him in your hearts. You are invited to let Jesus go, as we all have to let each other go, and then to receive the Living Christ through the bread and the cup at this table. You are invited to lay your burdens down, so that you may sing and dance in joy. You are invited.

Thanksgiving

One: May the Light breaking forth in the night be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

One: We give you thanks, O Holy One,

Many: **For Jesus as an infant reflecting you in his smile and his cry, his eyes and his toes, his heart and his mouth.**

One: We give you thanks, O Holy One,

Many: **For Jesus as a man who laughed and loved, wept and healed, and spoke, clearly your Word to this world, so that we might know the passion of your love.**

One: We give you thanks, O Holy One,

Many: **For Jesus Christ, who died to free us from that which binds, and rose so that our tombs may be opened to the promise of new life.**

Words of Institution

Sharing the Bread and Wine

One: The gifts of God for the people of God. Come, for all things are ready.

(Communion is received by intinction. Take a wafer or bread and dip it into the cup to receive both elements. Gluten free wafers are available.)

advent conspiracy

CONSPIRE: Make secret plans jointly to commit a hidden action

LATE MIDDLE ENGLISH- from Latin *conspirare* agree & plot, from *con-* together with + *spirare* breathe.

CONSPIRACY: Make Advent plans jointly to breathe in peace, hope, love and joy

LATE HOLY COVENANT- from Latin lighting candles to songs of celebration let us conspire to bring our souls into the Christmas season.

December 25, 10:55 am

christmas day

Celebrating in scripture & song

WELCOME TO HOLY COVENANT

We welcome all who worship with us at Holy Covenant. Guests and members, we invite you to sign our friendship pads so that we may have a record of your worshipping with us and be in touch with you during the week. Members, please indicate any changes in your contact information. We invite our visitors and members to linger following worship and join us in light refreshments and conversation.

NEW LIFE IN GUATEMALA

Can you make a life sustaining contribution to the Village of Chuk Muk, Guatemala? In partnership with Piedmont UU congregation we are working to raise \$10,000 for this community for two consecutive years. Purchase an ear of corn for \$100.* Purchase a cup full of Cocoa for \$10.* Make checks payable to HCUCC, with Guatemala in memo line. (*If your organization does matching gifts, give through the Sinapi Foundation.)

JOIN OUR NEW MEMBER - INQUIRER'S CLASSES THIS JANUARY

If you would like to get more involved and learn more about our congregation and the United Church of Christ, we would encourage you to attend our Inquirer's Classes. **January 22, 9:30 AM: Who We Are & What We Believe, January 29, History of UCC & Holy Covenant, February 5: Organization & Opportunities for Involvement.** We will welcome new members on February 12. Please contact the church office at 704-599-9810 or office@holycovenantucc.org if you are interested in joining the church and/or attending these classes.

CONSISTORY RETREAT

Our Consistory will be gathering the weekend of January 20 & 21 to begin discussing ways to best serve Holy Covenant. If you have any concerns you would like to share with the leadership team, please feel free to contact one of them. Officers for the new year are: Jeff Hughes, President; Jeff Edwards-Knight, Vice-President, Cheryl Milam, Secretary, and Diane Neese, Treasurer. Other members of Consistory include: Yvette Ross, Renee Brown, Micheal Hall, Karen Long, Michael Baldonado, Faye Humphrey, Joe Behr-Stenzel, Lynn Chavarria, Sally Duffy, Kathleen Smith, Martha Bomely, and Jim Hong.

Holy Covenant United Church of Christ

Rev. Nancy Ellett Allison, *Ph.D., Pastor*

Mr. Jared Fischer, *Music Director*

Mr. Steven Burleson, *Youth & Young Adult Pastor*

Mr. Gregg Walker, *Ministry Intern*

Mrs. Dawn Simmons, *Executive Assistant*

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