



Silent Meditation

*God did not wait till the world was ready,
Till people and nations were at peace.
Jesus came when the heavens were unsteady,
And prisoners cried out for release.*

*God came to a world which did not mesh,
To heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made flesh
The Maker of the stars was born.*

*We cannot wait till the world is sane
To raise our songs with joyful voice,
For to share our grief, to touch our pain,
God sent us Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!*

~ Madeleine L'Engle, from "First Coming"

"Everything want to be loved.

*Us sing and dance, make faces and flower bouquets, trying to be loved.
You ever notice that trees do everything to get attention we do, except walk?*

~Alice Walker

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
A SEASON OF LOVE
FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

December 24, 2017

10:55 AM

Gathering Music

Jared Fischer

Welcome and Announcements

Nancy Ellett Allison

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

Many: And also with you.

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

Opening Voluntary

Jared Fischer

* Call to Worship

Jason Ward

One: Glorious God, like the sudden brilliance of the star shining into
sleepy shepherd's eyes, you bring us surprising light in the
darkness.

Many: As your Light illuminated Bethlehem, illuminate our lives as well!

One: How shall we capture the song of the angels?

How shall we count all the stars in the sky?

How shall we measure your great love for us?

**Many: Like Mary, we shall ponder in our hearts all we have seen and
heard, and we too shall not be able to keep our joy to
ourselves!**

One: May our gifts be flashes of brightness sent in to all the world in
the name of Christ.

**Many: May our lives radiate the love of Christ, the sign of God's
redeeming love.**

Passing of the Peace

Jason Ward

One: Let us now greet one another as a sign of God's peace, for the
peace of Christ is here to stay.

Many: Thanks be to God.

** All rise in body or spirit ϕ Sing Response ✕ Seating by Ushers*

* Hymn

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

ADESTE FIDELES

O come, all ye faithful, joyful, and triumphant,
Oh come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him born the King of angels;

Refrain: O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Highest, Most Holy, Light of Light Eternal
Born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;
Very God, begotten not created: *Refrain*

Sing choirs of angels sing in exultation
Sing all ye citizens of heaven above;
Glory to God, all glory in the highest: *Refrain*

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given;
Word of the Father now in flesh appearing: *Refrain*

Lighting the Advent Candle

Kevin, Joy, Annika, and Ben Decker

One: We have lit three candles—for hope, for peace, and for joy. Today we light the fourth candle—the candle of love. With this flame we signify the love of God that surrounds and fills us at all times, and which we recognize in a special way in the Christmas story.

Many: There is no greater power than love. It is stronger than rulers and empires, stronger than grief or despair, stronger even than death. We love, because God loves us.

One: Loving God, we open ourselves to you this Christmas season. As these candles are lit, light our lives with your imagination.

Many: Show us the creative power of hope. Teach us the peace that comes from justice. Fill us with the kind of joy that cannot be contained, but must be shared. Magnify your love within us. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you, that we may walk in the light of Christ. Amen.

(Lighting of the candles.)

Advent Carol

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

VENI EMMANUEL

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's deep shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O wisdom from on high
And order all things far and nigh
To us the path of knowledge show
And help us in thy way to go.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Children's Message & Offering

Nancy Ellett Allison

(Following the Children's Message, preschoolers go to extended care and those in kindergarten through fifth grade to Children's Church.)

Pastoral Prayer

Cheri Dennis

Special Music

“Mary’s Slumber Song”

text, M. Boelitz; music, Max Reger
Jared Fischer, piano; Laura Valles, soprano

Maria sitzt im Rosenhag
Und wiegt ihr Jesuskind,
Durch die Blätter leise
Weht der warme Sommerwind.

Amid the roses Mary sits
And rocks her Jesus-child,
While amid the treetops
Sighs the breeze so warm and mild.

Zu ihren Füßen singt
Ein buntes Vögelein:
Schlaf, Kindlein, süße,
Schlaf nun ein!

And soft and sweetly sings
A bird upon a bough:
Ah, baby, dear one,
Slumber now!

Hold ist dein Lächeln,
Holder deines Schlummers Lust,
Leg dein müdes Köpfchen
Fest an deiner Mutter Brust!
Schlaf, Kindlein, süße,
Schlaf nun ein!

Happy is Thy laughter,
Holy is Thy silent rest,
Lay Thy head in slumber
Fondly on Thy Mother's breast.
Ah, baby, dear one,
Slumber now!

* Gospel Lesson

Luke 1:46-55

Cheri Dennis

And Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.’

One: May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Many: **Thanks be to God. Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.**

Reflection on Love

Nancy Ellett Allison

MORAVIAN LOVE FEAST

One: We invite all to join us in sharing the fullness of God's love poured out to us on this Christmas Day. As we share in this Love Feast, we celebrate the abundance of life and the generosity of God.

(Our servers will offer each person a sweet bun and a cup of cocoa as music is played. When all are served, we will join in prayer.)

Moravian Chorale 158

“O Morning Star”

WIE SCHON LEICHTET

O Morning Star, how clear and bright,
Your beam shines forth in truth and light!
My Sovereign meek and lowly!
O Root of Jesse, Promised One, my God and Ruler,
You have won my heart to serve you solely!
You are holy, great and glorious, all victorious,
Rich in blessing, rule and might o'er all possessing.

Come heavenly Brightness, Light divine,
And deep within my heart now shine,
There make yourself an altar!
Fill me with joy and strength to be your member,
Joined eternally in love that cannot falter;
Longing for you does possess me; turn and bless me;
Here in sadness eye and heart long for your gladness.

Prayer *(in unison)*

Come Lord Jesus our Guest to be,
Bless these gifts bestowed by Thee.
Bless our dear ones everywhere;
And keep them in thy loving care. Amen.

Music during the Love Feast

(As you enjoy both music and food, offer to God prayers of gratitude.)

“The Angels and the Shepherds” arr. Sylvia Woods
Kristin Andes and Hannah McGraw, harp

“What Child Is This?” GREENSLEEVES
arr. Holy Covenant Music Cooperative; featuring Morgan Rush, alto sax

Offertory Invitation

Nancy Ellett Allison

* Offertory Music “Angels We Have Heard on High” GLORIA

**Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o’er the plain
And the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strain.**

Refrain: Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

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

Refrain

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

Refrain

**See Him in a manger laid, Jesus, Lord of heaven and earth;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, with us sing our Savior's birth.**

Refrain

* Offertory Dedication

Nancy Ellett Allison

* Closing Hymn

“Silent Night”

STILLE NACHT

(As the last line of each verse is sung, please raise your candle)

φ *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,
Child of God, love’s pure light,
Radiant beams from your holy face
Bring the dawn of redeeming grace;
Jesus Lord at your birth,
Jesus Lord at your birth.*

* Benediction

Nancy Ellett Allison

Postlude

Jared Fischer

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

Christmas Eve Chili & Soup supper and caroling 5:30-7:00
Candlelight Service at 7:30pm.

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.

LESSONS & CAROLS - December 31, 2017

Rev. Barbara Thomas will bring the message and we'll once more enjoy our favorite Christmas carols.

HEALING SERVICE - January 7, 2018

Join us for this service of healing and new beginnings which will include Communion and the opportunity for specific prayers of healing. Cheri Dennis will be our preacher for the morning.

ROOM IN THE INN JANUARY 14

Thanks to all who have signed up! The first RITI of the season was a big success! **To complete our needs for the second neighbor hosting, we're in need of drivers to return neighbors to UMC Monday morning, cleanup crew for Monday, to be complete by 9am, and volunteers to help with laundry needs.** Contact Suzanne Lamorey TODAY, suzlam@yahoo.com if you are able to assist.

CAMPING GEAR COLLECTION FOR URBAN MINISTRY CENTER

UMC is seeking donations for clients who are unsheltered, whether they are camping somewhere or sleeping in Uptown. Any item that would be useful for campers is helpful- sleeping bags, sleeping pads, tents, tarps, backpacks, etc. Also, warm coats and socks! Look for the collection area in the gathering room. Questions? Contact Suzanne Lamorey, suzlam@yahoo.com or 704-654-7267.

SOJOURNERS CLASS -

NOT YOUR TYPICAL SUNDAY SCHOOL GATHERING

The Sojourners will not meet on New Year's Eve, Dec. 31. We will resume discussing *Biblical Literalism* on January 7 with Chapters 29, 30, and 31. All are welcome to join us at 9:45--no preparation necessary.

12x12 SERVE. STAND UP. SHARE.

Take action with Missions & Justice! We need to be heard; we need to act! M&J wants to know how the people of Holy Covenant are responding to the many issues facing our people and our society today. Write your mission, drop it in the basket in the Gathering Room and M&J will track them as the year goes along.

- Support the Jamel Niner Pantry with food items and/or gently used professional clothing for UNCC students
- Thanks to all who contributed to the Angel Tree!
- Volunteer with Room In The Inn. See the sign up board in the gathering room. Next hosting is January 14.

WE COULDN'T PROVIDE OUR WARM WELCOME WITHOUT THE HELP OF:

Elder for December:

Kathi Smith, kathleenie53@msn.com or 704-614-7674

Deacons for December: Renee Brown, Micheal Hall

Recyclers: Suzanne Lamorey

Greeters: Donna Collins, Lisa Sherman

Ushers: Barry Holcomb, Tom Magraw, Shakti Subramanian

Media: Brian Hankins, Lisa Cloninger

Tabulators: Karen Long, Terry Raley-Dennis

Refreshments: Hospitality

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Susan Bennett Stiles, Gail Bushman, Frank & Charlotte Carbone, David Cable, Donna Collins, Linn Finger, Phil Kaveler, Helen Lambert, Irene Mikkelson, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Jean Raley-Dennis, Yami Senturias, Ed Sharp, Anita Taylor, Caroline Utz, Kathleen Wagner

Friends & Family Members

The family of Bob Adams (Ed Vickery), Ray Adams (Linda Burby), Bill Bennett (Kathleen Wagner), Marj Carmine (Donna Collins), Bill Funderburk, Kathy Gibson (Jeff Edwards-Knight), Alice Huskins (Jared Fischer), Alex Kiker & Tiffany Kiker (Jean Raley Dennis), Chuck McAllister (Donna Collins), Sabrina McKnight (Deb Winston), Beth Poyer Meyer, Aldo Sanchez (Alice Phelan), Naomi Scheiperpeter, Jessie Sharp (Terry Raley-Dennis), Cynthia & Tommy Simpson, Becky Neese Smith (Diane Neese), Luz Soto (Aida Marcial), Doris Storie (Garrett Barlow), Wayne & Libby Walters (Barry Holcomb), Gary & Wanda Gilbert West (John Rapp), Elizabeth Wilson (Donna Collins), Larry & LuAnn Weidner and their granddaughter Anna (Dawn Simmons)

Holy Covenant United Church of Christ

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

Ms. Cheri Dennis, Ministry Intern

Mr. Jared Fischer, Director of Music

Mrs. Dawn Simmons, Executive Assistant

Rev. Barbara Thomas, Interim Minister for Church & Family Life

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