



Silent Meditation

Christmas gift suggestions:
To your enemy, forgiveness.
To an opponent, tolerance.
To a friend, your heart.
To a customer, service.
To all, charity.
To every child, a good example.
To yourself, respect.

~ Oren Arnold

There is something audacious and mysterious and reality-affirming in the assertion that has stayed alive for two thousand years that God took on eyes and ears and hands and feet, hunger and tears and laughter and the flu, joy and pain and gratitude and our terrible, redemptive human need for each other. It's not provable, but it's profoundly humanizing and concretely and spiritually exacting. And it's no less rational — no more crazy — than economic and political myths to which we routinely deliver over our fates in this culture.

~ Krista Tippett

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CHRISTMAS EVE
FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

December 24, 2017

Please silence cell phones

Prelude

Jared Fischer

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)*

Opening Voluntary

Jared Fischer

* Christmas Acclamation

Janice Spraggins

One: From generation to generation, old dreams die and new dreams come to life. At Christmas we celebrate the promise fulfilled in the birth of Jesus.

Many: **Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace.**

One: Hope gives way to joy and prayer to proclamation.

Many: **Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace.**

One: The candles tell the story. Dawn invades midnight. The Light of the world has come!

Many: **Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace.**

One: This light is a light for all, warming us from within, radiating love, lighting our lives with the presence of God in human flesh, within us and among us now and always.

Many: **Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace! Goodwill to all.**

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

* Hymn

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

ADESTE FIDELES

David Smith, trumpet; Bill Tyler, horn

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 Christ Candle Graham, Whitney, Henry and Amelia Lincoln

One: We light Candles in this Advent and Christmas season:

Many: Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,

One: Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,

Many: Candles of joy despite sadness,

One: Candles of love to inspire all our living,

Many: Candles of courage for fears ever present,

One: Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,

Many: Candles that will burn all year long.

(The Advent Candles are lit.)

One: Come to us, Lord Jesus, be born in us this night, in our hearts,
our minds, our lives as these candles are lit against the
darkness.

Many: Eternal God, as we light the Christ Candle, this holy night
glows with the radiance of your true light. May that light
illuminate our hearts and shine in our words and deeds.
Amen.

(The Christ Candle is lit.)

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION: REJOICE, REJOICE!

(Narrator, Abraham, Hagar Readers)

Narrator: Nancy Ellett Allison
Waiting, watching, hoping against hope, the faithful have looked and longed for a Savior from generation to generation. Wrapped up in our own lives, in our own struggles, consumed with our own desires and failings, still, our hope is in God. At long last, all generations cry out:
All: Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Abraham: Keith Dennis
I light a candle for Abraham who followed God's call. He went from his own country to the land that God showed him. God promised to make a nation from Abraham's descendants and bless all families of the earth through him.

Like Abraham,

Now we see the fulfillment of that promise with the gift of this child... today we are blessed indeed!

All: Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Hagar: Isley Whitfield
I light a candle for Hagar, Sarah's enslaved Egyptian girl who bore Abraham a son, named Ishmael. When Hagar was at the end of all hope because of her suffering, she fled into the wilderness. It was there that she met "the God who sees;" the God who sees even those in slavery, crying in despair.

Like Hagar,

This baby is a gift to people like us:

All: Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Gift of Music "In the Bleak Midwinter" by Holst & Rossetti
Lisa Cloninger, Caroline Mullis Fischer, Kathi Smith, vocals
Avery McGuirt, fiddle; David McGuirt, guitar

From Generation to Generation “Rejoice, Rejoice!”
(Jacob & Moses Readers)

Jacob:

Andrew Kaveler

I light a candle for Jacob, grandson of Abraham. Even though he was a liar and a cheater, there was still room for Jacob in God’s plan. He had a dream one night that a ladder filled with angels went straight from earth to God. In the morning he called that place Beth-el, the House of God.

Like Jacob,

Today a child is born Emmanuel--God with us. God has come to dwell with us! We give thanks

All: Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Moses:

Barry Holcomb

I light a candle for Moses who had excuses when God spoke to him from a burning bush. He didn’t want to help God free the Israelites from slavery. But God didn’t give up on Moses or on Israel. God’s power delivered them from the hands of the mighty Pharaoh. We worship a God who delivers! God gave us the law at Sinai to guide us. Today we continue to worship a God who guides us!

Like Moses,....

Today God gives a Savior who will deliver us from evil, a Savior who is our guide.

All: Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Gift of Music

“O Holy Night”

by Adolphe Adams

Jared Fischer, piano; Dorrie Hankins, soprano

From Generation to Generation

“Rejoice, Rejoice!”

(Ruth & David Readers)

Ruth:

Yasmin Senturias

I light a candle for Ruth, a foreigner from Moab, who married one of the sons of Israel. When Ruth’s husband died, she followed her mother-in-law, Naomi, back to Israel. Ruth was Naomi’s faithful friend, and her God, the God of Israel, was faithful in restoring their happiness. Naomi’s cousin, a man named Boaz, married Ruth, even though she was an immigrant, an outsider, Ruth gave birth to a baby that brought great joy to their family. Jesus is one of Ruth descendants.

Like Ruth,....

Jesus comes to bring great joy to the world!

All: Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

David:

Jeff Edwards-Knight

I light a candle for David. He was God’s chosen, called a man after God’s own heart; he ruled as king in Israel for many years. He was also an adulterer and murderer, and disappointed God in many ways. But God was forgiving of and faithful to David.

Like David,.....

This night in Bethlehem, a new King is born, this Ruler will bring peace to the world. He will be called the Prince of Peace.

All: Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Gift of Music

Holy Covenant Music Cooperative

* Hymn

“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)*

From Generation to Generation “Rejoice, Rejoice!”
(Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary Readers)

Elizabeth: Beth Christian-Sharp
I light a candle for Elizabeth the aging woman on whom God looked with favor. Elizabeth and Zechariah, the priest, a barren couple had now conceived. The child in her womb leapt as she greeted Mary. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and cried out, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.’ Her son, John, became the prophet who prepared the way for the coming Christ.

Like Elizabeth, ...

Children still leap for joy at Christ’s birth!

All: Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Joseph: William Judd
I light a candle for Joseph, a trusting soul, betrothed to Mary who gave birth to a son. They named him Jesus, as the angel instructed. The angel told Joseph that this child will save all people from their sin.

Like Joseph, I.....

The hopes of many rest on our child, our son.

All: Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Gift of Music

“Mary Did You Know?”

Jared Fischer, piano; Meg Houlihan, alto

Mary did you know that your baby boy will one day walk on water?
Mary did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?
This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you

Mary did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?
Mary did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with his hand?
Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
And when you kiss your little baby, you have kissed the face of God
Mary did you know?

The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak, the praises of the Lamb

Mary did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?
Mary did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?
This sleeping child you're holding is the great I am
Mary did you know?

Mary:

Hannah Magraw

I light a candle for Mary, a young girl called to serve. She said yes to the mysterious voice of God. The child she bore “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.

Like Mary,...

God’s mercy is on those who fear God, from generation to generation. God has fulfilled the promise made to our ancestors, to Abraham and Sarah and Hagar and to their descendants forever.

All: Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Gift of 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 2

Nancy Ellett Allison

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

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

* Hymn

“On This Day Earth Shall Ring”

PERSONENT HODIE

**On this day earth shall ring, with the song children sing to the Lord,
Christ our King, born on earth to save us; him the Spirit gave us.**

Refrain: Ide-o-o-o, ideo-o-o, Ideo gloria in excelsis Deo!

**Ours the joy, ours the mirth; when he came down to earth, Bethlehem
saw his birth; ox and ass beside him from the cold would hide him.**
(Refrain)

**God's bright star, o'er his head, Magi three to him led; kneel they low
by his bed, lay their gifts before him, praise him and adore him.**
(Refrain)

**On this day angels sing; with their song earth shall ring, praising Christ,
heaven's King, born on earth to save us; peace and love he gave us.**
(Refrain)

From Generation to Generation “Rejoice, Rejoice!” Nancy Ellett Allison
ALL: Today we add our voices to the chorus of thanksgiving. We sing our part in the song that rises through time, around the world, in every language, “Glory to the newborn King!” We give thanks for God’s son, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord! Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

All Sing: Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

* Hymn “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” MENDELSSOHN

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 angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain: Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King"

Christ, by highest heav’n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th' incarnate Deity,
Pleased with us in flesh 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 we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth. (*Refrain*)

Offertory Invitation Barbara Thomas

Offertory

* Offering Response 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 him my heart.

* Offertory Dedication Barbara Thomas

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation

Nancy Ellett Allison

You are invited to this table. You are invited to make room for the infant Jesus 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

Barbara Thomas

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

Nancy Ellett Allison

Sharing the Bread and Wine

One: These are 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.)

Music during Communion

"What Child Is This?"

arr. Jane Weidensaul

Kristin Andes, Hannah Magraw, harp

Prayer after Communion

Barbara Thomas

May this eternal truth be always on our hearts: That the God who breathes this world into being, placed stars into the heavens, and designed a butterfly's wing, is the God who entrusted all life to the care of ordinary people. This is the One who became vulnerable that we might know how strong is the power of love: a mystery so deep it is impossible to grasp, a mystery so beautiful it is impossible to ignore, Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lighting Our Candles of Commitment

Elders & Pastors

(Please sit in silent meditation as we bring the Christ Light into the congregation to light each candle.)

* 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

(You will find baskets in the foyer for returning your candle and for recycling your worship bulletin.)

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

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.

FINANCIAL REMINDER

Thank you, one and all, for the many gifts you bring to Holy Covenant through the year. For financial contributions to be counted in 2017 as tax deductions, please ensure all offering checks are dated, received or post marked no later than December 31, 2017. Any receipts for reimbursements or gifts in kind should be received in the office by December 27th, to ensure timely processing.

LESSONS & CAROLS, DECEMBER 31

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

HEALING SERVICE, JANUARY 7

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.

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. Contact Suzanne Lamorey, 704-654-7267.

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, suzlam@yahoo.com if you are able to assist.

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.

NEW MEMBER CLASSES BEGIN JANUARY 21

Watch for full announcement coming soon.

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, 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

3501 West W.T. Harris Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28269-8510

www.holycovenantucc.org office@holycovenantucc.org 704-599-9810