



## Silent Meditation

"When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone,  
when the kings and princes are home,  
when the shepherds are back with their flocks, the work of  
Christmas begins:  
    to find the lost,  
    to heal the broken,  
    to feed the hungry,  
    to release the prisoner,  
    to rebuild the nations,  
    to bring peace among the people,

to make music in the heart.”

Howard Thurman

**Our Faith is over 2000 Years Old. Our thinking is not.**

# HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## CHRISTMAS EVE ~ THE BIRTH OF JESUS

December 24, 2021, 7:30 pm

Welcome and Announcements Cheri Dennis  
One: May the peace of the Christ Child be with you.  
Many: And also with you.

**Call to Worship**      **“Do You Have Room?”**      **S.B. Edwards**  
*Kathi Smith, Lisa Cloninger*

\* Hymn 143                            "On Christmas Night"                            SUSSEX CAROL  
On Christmas night all Christians sing, to hear the news the angels bring;  
On Christmas night all Christians sing, to hear the news the angels bring—  
New of great joy, news of great mirth, news of our gracious Ruler's birth.

Then why should we on earth be sad, since our Redeemer made us glad;  
Then why should we on earth be sad, since our Redeemer made us glad,  
When from our sin Christ set us free, all for to gain our liberty.

From out of mystery came the Light, which made the angels sing this night;  
From out of mystery came the Light, which made the angels sing this night:  
“Glory to God and peace to all, forevermore, Alleluia!”

**Lighting of Advent & Christ Candles**                           **Joy, Kevin, Bea, & Lex Decker**  
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. (*Luke 2:6–7*)  
When the world seems predictable, stuck in patterns of injustice and hurt,  
The Holy astonishes us with good news, and we find Awe.

### **(Light Christ Candle)**

Where in the world do we know Awe these days?

\* Please take a comfortable posture that supports your worshiping, reading, and singing.

Song	"Jesus, Light of the World"	ELDERKIN
	Hail, the Bearer of God's Peace! Jesus, the light of the world. Hail, the Sun of righteousness! Jesus, the light of the world.	
	We'll walk in the light, beautiful light. Come where the dewdrops of mercy shine bright. O, shine all around us by day and by night. Jesus, the light of the world.	
Children's Message		Laura Hankins
Choral Anthem	"Away in a Manger"	arr. C. Bara
Pastoral Prayer		Cheri Dennis
Lord's Prayer ( <i>in unison</i> )		
Our God, in whom is heaven, blessed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.		
Quartet	"O Little Town of Bethlehem"	arr. S. McLachlan
	Lisa Cloninger, Kathi Smith, vocalists	
	David McGuirt, guitar; Avery McGuirt, violin	
Scripture Lesson	Isaiah 62:6-12	Alice Phelan-Young
Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted sentinels; all day and all night they shall never be silent. You who remind the Lord, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it renowned throughout the earth. The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink the wine for which you have labored; but those who garner it shall eat it and praise the Lord, and those who gather it shall drink it in my holy courts.		
Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway, clear it of stones, lift up an ensign over the peoples. The Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to daughter Zion, 'See, your salvation comes; his reward is with him, and		

his recompense before him.' They shall be called, 'The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord'; and you shall be called, 'Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.'

One: May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the church;

Many: Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.

Choral Anthem

"Candle in the Night"

R.C. Clatterback

\* Gospel Lesson

Luke 2:1-20

Alice Phelan-Young

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to 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.

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 he favors!'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

One: For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us, for the word of God within us.

Many: Alleluia! Thanks be to God.

Sermon

"Each of Us Is an Innkeeper"

Cheri Dennis

(*The Innkeeper* monologue is from Frederick Buechner's sermon, "The Birth.")

Solo

“Gesu Bambino/O Holy Night”  
*Dorrie Hankins*

arr. B. Wolaver

## SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

\* One: Let us prepare for the Sacrament of Holy Communion. May God be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

Many: We lift them to God.

One: Let us give thanks to God.

Many: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Hymn

“A Communion Hymn for Christmas”

GREENRIDGE

Gathered round your table, on this holy eve,  
Viewing Bethlehem’s stable, we rejoice and grieve;  
Joy to see you lying in your manger bed,  
Weep to see you dying in our sinful stead.

Bethlehem’s Incarnation, Calvary’s bitter cross,  
Wrought for us salvation by your pain and loss;  
Now we fall before you in this holy place,  
Prostrate we adore you for your gift of grace.

With profoundest wonder, we your body take—  
Laid in manger yonder, broken for our sake;  
Hushed in adoration, we approach the cup—  
Bethlehem’s pure oblation freely offered up.

Christmas Babe so tender, Lamb who bore our blame,  
How shall sinners render praises due your name?  
Do your own good pleasure in the lives we bring;  
Glory, glory, glory, let the heavens ring!

One: We invite all who celebrate Christ’s life and love to join us at this table of fellowship. As we join together in Holy Communion, we confess our faith as Christians:

Many: *We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:*

*You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before us the ways of life and death. You seek to save us from aimlessness and sin.*

Yet we confess that there have been times when we have rejected life and with hurtful words or selfish and destructive actions, we have lost our way and through insensitivity and prejudice, have denied your image in others.

One: *You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.*

Many: *We come to the table of communion, confessing, not that we are righteous, but that we love our Lord Jesus Christ and desire to remember him. Let us admit, not that we are strong, but that we are needy; not that we have any claim on Christ, but that Christ invites us to receive his grace and experience his presence.*

*In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.*

One: We remember on the night of his betrayal, as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples saying: “Take, eat: This is my body, broken for you.” In like manner, Jesus took the cup, and after giving thanks, gave it to the disciples and said: “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for all for the forgiveness of sins.” Remembering this act of love, we offer our praise and proclaim our faith.

Many: *With thanksgiving we celebrate the truth that:*

*You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races. You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.*

*You promise to all who trust you, forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.*

One: Come now, Holy Spirit, come. Bless this bread and bless this fruit of the vine. Bless all of us in our eating and drinking at this table that our

eyes may be opened, and we may recognize the risen Christ in our midst, in each other, and in all for whom Christ died.

**Many:** Amen.

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

Song during Communion

“All Is Well”  
*Ed Vickery, Eric Miner*

M.W. Smith

Prayer of Thanksgiving (*in unison*)

We give thanks, Living God, that You have refreshed us at Your table by shining the Light of Christ into our lives. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us into the world in courage and peace. Amen.

Choral Anthem

“Night of Silence”

D. Kantor

(*Individual congregational candles will be lit while the choir is singing.*

*The ushers will bring the light to the congregation.*

*To light your candle, tip it into the flame of the lit candle.)*

Cold are the people, Winter of life, We tremble in shadows this cold endless night,  
Frozen in the snow lie roses sleeping, Flowers that will echo the sunrise,  
Fire of hope is our only warmth, Weary, its flame will be dying soon.

Voice in the distance, Call in the night, On wind you enfold us You speak of the light,  
Gentle on the ear you whisper softly, Rumors of a dawn so embracing,  
Breathless love awaits darkened souls, Soon will we know of the morning.

Spirit among us, Shine like the star, Your light that guides shepherds and kings from afar,  
Shimmer in the sky so empty, lonely, Rising in the warmth of your Son’s love,  
Star unknowing of night and day, Spirit we wait for your loving Son.

\* Hymn 134                    "Silent Night, Holy Night"                    STILLE NACHT  
    **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.

*(There are baskets in the foyer for returning your candle.)*

\* Benediction Cheri Dennis

Postlude                    "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"                    arr. T. Wilhelmi



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**Please remember to wear your mask when indoors as mandated by Mecklenburg County officials.  
Thank you for your cooperation.**