



United Church of Christ - Neillville

December 24, 2023 – 5 PM

Candlelight Service

Poinsettia dedications

Pastor Jim & Karen Mohr – (red) in memory of our parents, Roy & Van Nelson and George & Dorothy Mohr

Kevin & Jenny Erickson – (red) in memory of Kai Moseid (white) in honor of our family

Luke & Michelle Bergemann – (red) in loving memory of Sue Bergemann

Debbie & Joe Holman – (red) in loving memory of family and friends

Doris Bakker – (white) in honor of the church family

Roger Carl – (red) in loving memory of mom, Berdella Carl

Howie & Kathy Mathis – (red) in loving honor of our family past and present

Karlene Wallace – (red) in honor of my wonderful church family

Kirk & Nancy Rodman – (white) in honor of all our family

Josh & Jenna Ziegler – (red & white) in honor of our greatest blessings: Reese, William & Claire

Paul Vine & Kelley Burch – (red & white) in memory of Gordon Vine and Faith Vine

You may take your poinsettia home following the Christmas Eve service.

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Christmas Eve - December 24, 2023 – 5 PM
United Church of Christ, Neillsville
Pastor James Mohr

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

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PRELUDE “O’ Holy Night”

Adolphe Adam edited by Diane Bish
Karen Mohr

So, he,
The Lord of Light,
The Prince of Peace,
The King of Love,
came down
and crept in beside us.

RINGING OF THE CARILLON

ANTHEM “Echo Carol” Choir
Hugh S. Livingston

WELCOME

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

(Leader: Light Print – **People: Bold Print**)

(Four candles in the wreath are lit.)

We welcome the good news
of God’s presence in Jesus the Christ
who revealed the way
of hope, peace, joy, and love.

(Christ candle is lighted.)

May your way shine through us.

SOLO “All My Heart This Night Rejoices”

All my heart this night rejoices
As I hear, Far and near,
Sweetest angel voices.
“Christ is born,” their choirs are singing.
Till the air Everywhere Now with joy is ringing.

CALL TO WORSHIP

(Pastor: Light Print. **People: Bold Print**)

Light looked down and saw darkness.

“I will go there,” said Light.

Peace looked down and saw war.

“I will go there,” said Peace.

Love looked down and saw hatred.

“I will go there,” said Love.

CAROL “Angels, from the Realms of Glory”

#91 Red UCC vs 1,2,5

**1 Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o’er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation’s story
Now proclaim Messiah’s birth.**

Refrain:

**Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.**

**2 Shepherds, in the field abiding,
Watching o’er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing;
Yonder shines the infant light: (Refrain)**

**5 All creation, join in praising
God, the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising
To the eternal Three in One. (Refrain)**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(Pastor: Light Print. **People: Bold Print**)

How amazing is your love, great God! You are not distant from us in some faraway heaven; you have come close to us in a child born of simple parents and cradled in a borrowed bed of straw.

We confess we abuse this created world. When we stand by while the earth is despoiled and its destruction threatened,

God forgive.

When we inflict physical or emotional pain on those with whom we share our lives,

God forgive.

When we abuse or neglect our own bodies,

God forgive.

By your great love, God, draw us into new ways of living.
Teach us to cherish and nurture life in this fragile world, in
the manner of Jesus the Christ, your human face, whose
birth we celebrate today. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON (Pastor)

PRAISE RESPONSE *“Gloria Canon”*

(Sung two times as a canon -
organ side first, piano side second)

Gloria, gloria in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia!

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Isaiah 9:2-7 A Child Has Been Born
New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

^{2[a]}The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.

³You have multiplied exultation;^[b]
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴For the yoke of their burden
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders,
and he is named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷Great will be his authority,^[c]
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

CAROL *“O Little Town of Bethlehem”*

#99 Red UCC vs, 1-3

**1 O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.**

Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

**2 For Christ is born of Mary;
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to men on earth.**

**3 How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive Him still,
the dear Christ enters in.**

EPISTLE LESSON

Hebrews 1:1-4 The exact imprint
New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various
ways by the prophets,² but in these last days he has
spoken to us by a Son,^[a] whom he appointed heir of all
things, through whom he also created the worlds.³ He is
the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's
very being, and he sustains^[b] all things by his powerful
word. When he had made purification for^[c] sins, he sat
down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,⁴ having
become as much superior to angels as the name he has
inherited is more excellent than theirs.

CAROL *“Once in Royal David's City”*

#104 Red UCC

**1 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.**

**2 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, and meek, and lowly,
lived on earth our Savior holy.**

**3 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.**

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 2:1-20

Do not be afraid

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

2 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered.

⁴Joseph 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. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And 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 in the guest room.

⁸Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,^[b] the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,^[c] praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"^[d]

¹⁵When 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." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, ¹⁹and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

MEDITATION

"The Human Face of God"

(With thanks to John A.T. Robinson)

CAROL

"On Christmas Night"

#101 Red UCC vs. 1 and 4

**1 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:
news of great joy, news of great mirth,
news of our merciful King's birth.**

**4 All out of darkness we have light,
which made the angels sing this night;
all out of darkness we have light,
which made the angels sing this night:
"Glory to God and peace to men,
now and forevermore. Amen."**

THE OFFERING SERVICE

Invitation to Generosity

Offertory and Distribution of the Communion Elements

Choral Prelude on "In dulci jubilo" J.S. Bach

Doxology

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done:
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.**

Prayer of Dedication

We offer this bread.

We offer this cup.

We offer these gifts.

We offer ourselves.

Accept, most gracious God, these offerings.
May they be transformed into your love and mission.

Through Christ our Savior.

Amen.

CAROL *"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"*

#83 Red UCC

**1 Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
and with fear and trembling stand;
ponder nothing earthly minded,
for, with blessing in His hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
our full homage to demand.**

**2 King of kings, yet born of Mary,
as of old on earth He stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture,**

**in the body and the blood.
He will give to all the faithful
His own self for heav'nly food.**

**3 Rank on rank the host of heaven
spreads its vanguard on the way,
as the Light of light descendeth
from the realms of endless day,
that the pow'rs of hell may vanish
as the darkness clears away.
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

CHRISTMAS EVE COMMUNION

INVITATION (Leader: Light Print. **People: Bold Print**)

On this holy night we remember what Jesus said:

I am the bread of life.

You who come to me shall not hunger;

You who believe in me shall never thirst.

**In company with all who hunger for spiritual food, we
come to this table to know the risen Christ in the sharing
of this life-giving bread.**

COMMUNION PRAYER

God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to God.

Let us give thanks to God Most High.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

You have entered this place, O God, and in your holy shadow, heaven tangles with earth in the bread and wine, and the promise of flesh is realized.

Come now, God.

As you once came to us in a stable in Bethlehem, come now and be with us in the bread of Christ's body in this world that hungers and waits for peace.

Come now, God.

As once your Spirit poured forth life upon the earth, come now and pour the wine of Christ's blood for this creation, waiting for renewal. Be present in our hope in this holy time:

In the silence of power
And the power of silence;
In the throne rooms of the rich
And the shanties of the poor;
In overfed communities and underfed souls;
Gather up hope in the bread and wine.
Break open the good news of your incarnation:
On parched farmlands and frightened cities;
In the hearts of the proud
And the longings of the lowly.
Gather up the good news in the bread and wine.
Come now, God.

Where once we ate the bread of tears, nourish us now with the abundance of your love made real in a small child born long ago and far away, yet real and living now in our midst.
Come now, God.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

RECEIVING THE ELEMENTS

(The United Church of Christ celebrates open communion. The chalices distributed during the Offertory contain a wafer on one end and juice on the opposite end. When invited by the pastor remove the foil from the wafer side and then from the juice side to eat and drink.)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (all)

**We give thanks, O God, that you have come to us through Jesus Christ, both in the midst of time and history in the city of Bethlehem, and in the timeless presence of Christ's Spirit as we receive the gifts of bread and wine. Send us out into the world rejoicing, ready to share your love with the people we meet; through the grace of Jesus Christ.
Amen**

ANTHEM *"Mary Had a Baby"* Choir

Bonnie Weyer - Soloist

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

All of the lights in the church will be turned off and there will be a period of darkness, symbolizing the darkness of the world before Christ's coming. An acolyte will light the Christ candle from which the pastor will light his candle and those of ushers who will light the candles of all worshipers. Please do not tip lighted candles, lest hot wax spill. Tip only unlit candles to receive the flame. Slide the cup down the candle while lighting. Once lit, slide the cup up to fully enclose the flame.

THE CHRISTMAS PRAYER

PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

CAROL "Silent Night, Holy Night"

#95 and #96 Red UCC

(Two verses in English, one verse in German)

1 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.

2 Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar,
heav'nly hosts sing, "Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!"

3 Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft, einsam wacht
Nur das traute, hochheilige Paar
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!

COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

EXTINGUISHING OF THE CANDLES

CAROL "Joy to the World"

#313 Red UCC

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare Him room,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

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

POSTLUDE

This week's radio broadcast
is sponsored by Jim & Rosie Repinski
in celebration of Christ's birth.

WELCOME

We welcome you to our service of worship!

We are glad that you have joined us in person,
through the internet or on the radio.

We pray that you will hear God's call,
seek to follow Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit.

YouTube link for Sunday, December 24, 2023

https://youtube.com/live/CesZryS_Vac

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday, December 24th – Christmas Eve Worship

- 4 PM Deacon – JoAnn Wren
Greeter(s) – Jim & Rosie Repinski
Usher(s) – Craig Heck, Scott Williams

Tuesday, December 26th –

- 1 PM – Marge Goetsch Bible Study –
*now meeting in the lounge of church

Coffee fellowship after worship -
Sign up sheet is temporarily in the church office.
Dec 24 – no morning service
Dec 31 - Sharon Buddenhagen
Jan 7 – Carole Romens
Jan 14 -