

First Sunday after Christmas
December 31, 2023
United Church of Christ - Neillsville
Pastor Sue Vornholt

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PRELUDE *"Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" with "Jesu,
Joy of Man's Desiring"* arr. Anna Laura Page
Karen Mohr

RINGING OF THE CARILLON

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our Shared Life and Service

We thank God for these opportunities for
fellowship and service.

Thanks be to God!

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the gifts of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also, with you.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: When Jesus is born to Mary and Joseph,

People: God is there.

Leader: When they present Jesus at the temple.

People: God is there.

Leader: When Simeon holds Jesus in his arms,

People: God is there

Leader: When Anna recognizes Jesus as the
answer to prayer,

People: God is there.

Leader: This very morning,

People: God is here.

Leader: In the future we cannot see.

People: God is there.

All: **Let us worship God!**

HYMN *"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"*

#144 NCH Charles Wesley F Meldelsohn
Karen Mohr

**1 Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the Christ-child bring;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinner reconciled!"
Joyful, all you saints arise,
join the triumph of the skies;
With the angel host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Refrain:
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the Christ-child bring!"**

**2 Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time the Savior comes,
offspring of the Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased on earth with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel. [Refrain]**

**3 Hail the Bearer of God's peace!
Hail the Sun of righteousness,
Light and life our Savior brings,
risen with radiant, healing wings.
Mildly laying glory by,
born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us all from earth,
born to give us second birth. [Refrain]**

INVOCATION

O God, in the sweetness of the story we tell today, the encounter of old and young— Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus to the elders— We feel the movement of your Spirit making all things new. Awake us to your presence in this moment As we seek Christ in our midst: Let us recognize God-with-us, A light to the nations, your glory revealed. In Jesus' name we pray.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(All) Holy God, we know that you have been present to us throughout all of history, even throughout our own histories. We know you will be with us in our future. Yet often we don't live as if we know that. As Simeon recognized in Jesus the salvation of his people, we recognize in Jesus' Way our own wholeness and health, yet we often fail to follow. As Anna recognized in Jesus the redemption of her people, we recognize in Jesus God's saving grace for us, yet we often fail to rejoice and to share this good news. Forgive us, make us wise and joyful and strong so that we live in the understanding of your never-ending love. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE (Pastor)

The scriptures promise that God will make all things new. As God makes the year new by God's love and forgiveness in Jesus. Amen.

PASSING OF THE PEACE

Give voice to God's love and peace; those around us need to hear the Good.

ALL: The Peace of God be with you.

All are invited to greet one another with such words as "The peace of Christ be with you," and the response: "And also with you."

PRAISE RESPONSE

(sung twice)

Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo.

Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Luke 2:22-40

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, ²⁹"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." ³³And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too." ³⁶There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. ³⁹When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

SERMON "Childhood Faith" Pastor Sue Vornholt

HYMN *"Away in the Manger"*

#124 NCH Anon. James R. Murray

1 Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he
lay,
the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

2 The cattle are lowing, the poor baby wakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; protect me, I pray,
and stay by my side until night turns to day.

3 Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and fit us for heaven to live with you there.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Let us pray as Christ Our Savior has taught us.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

CALL TO OFFERING

"Go Tell it on the Mountain" arr. Paul Manz

God, you call us to give as we have received in this Christmas Season when you have shared your Child with us, help us to share our blessing with those in need.

DEDICATION PRAYER

God of hope and joy, the gifts we offer to you pale when our minds try to grasp all we have been given in this season: wholeness in our woundedness, hope in our despair, peace in our turmoil, forgiveness in our rebellion. Like Simeon, we have listened with our ears that we might not miss you, and our eyes have seen your salvation! You gave us light in our darkness and hope in our discouragement. Help us embrace your extravagant

generosity as we give ourselves to others. In our Savior's holy name, we pray. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Send us into the world refreshed in hope,
Awake, alert, attuned to your presence, ready to
join your work of blessing for all. Amen

CLOSING HYMN *"Joy to the World"*

#132 NCH Isaac Watts Lowel Mason

1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
let earth its praises bring;
Let every heart prepare Christ room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

2 Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns!
Let all 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 Christ rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
The glories of God's righteousness
and wonders of God's love,
and wonders of God's love,
and wonders, wonders of God's love.

POSTLUDE

JOYS AND CONCERNS

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RADIO BROADCAST

**11 AM Sunday radio broadcast on WCCN
98.5FM and 1370AM**

YouTube link for December 31, 2023

<https://youtube.com/live/8Q56pzwVrT8>

This week's radio broadcast is sponsored anonymously by a "faithful listener"

Please have your articles for the January Newsletter into the church office by Tuesday, January 2nd



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday, December 31st – Worship

- **10 AM** Deacon – Byrl Buddenhagen
Greeter(s) – Travis & Ashley Vine
Usher(s) – Mickey Marty, Joel Raine

- **1 PM – Marge Goetsch Bible Study –**
*every week in church lounge



Hosting Coffee Fellowship after worship
Sign-up sheet on back bulletin board

Dec 31 – Sharon Buddenhagen
Jan 7 – Carole Romens
Jan 14 – Nancy & Kirk Rodman

