

**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

**Christmas Eve Worship Service
4:00 pm**



***But the angel said to the shepherds, do not be afraid for see
I am bringing you good news and great joy for all the people.***

Luke 2:10

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN**

December 24, 2021

Christmas Eve

4:00 pm

Gathering

PRELUDE

GREETING

RINGING OF THE BELL

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WEATH

L: Throughout this season we have waited and watched for God to become flesh and enter our world. Tonight, we gather together and light candles in honor of Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Christ Child.

P: **With the birth of Christ, salvation has drawn near.**

L: The God who ordered the chaos of the universe has come into the chaos of our world.

P: **The Word which was with God at the beginning came to live among us.**

L: While we were yet living in the valley of the shadow of death, the light of new life burst forth. We light this candle for Christ.

All: **Come let us welcome the Christ child into our world!**

***HYMN**

O Come, All Ye Faithful

***O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
come and behold him, born the King of angels; O come let us adore him, O come let
us adore him, O come let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.***

***Sing choirs of angels, sing in exultation, sing all ye citizens of heaven above! Glory to
God, glory in the highest; O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him, O come
let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.***

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, on this holy night, we gather together to remember that you hear the cries of your people, and listen to their hopes and dreams. We celebrate that when the time was right, you crept into our world as a vulnerable baby who slept in a manger, grew up to fulfill the deep yearnings of your people, and showed us the depth of your love and way. Be with us this night as we hear again the stories of a miracle long ago in Bethlehem when Mary brought forth your son, once and for all bringing together heaven and earth. We pray in the name of Jesus, born in a stable. **Amen**

Comfort in Despair

When God's people lived in exile in Babylon, they longed for home, for a better future, and for God to make all things new. In the midst of their despair, the prophet Isaiah spoke words of comfort.

FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

Suzanne Hagen

All the Earth is Hopeful



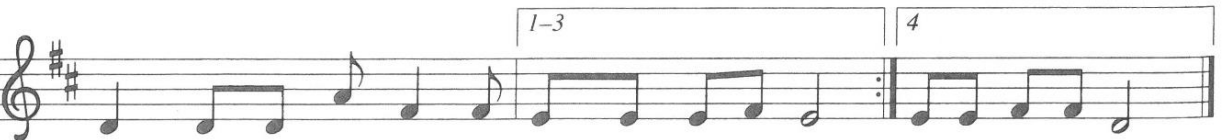
To - da la tie - rra es - pe - ra al Sal - va - dor
 1 All earth is hope - ful, the Sav - ior comes at last!
 2 Peo - ple of Is - rael, you heard the proph - et tell:
 3 Moun - tains and val - leys will have to be pre - pared;
 4 We first saw Je - sus a ba - by in a crib.



y el sur - co a - bier - to, la ob - ra del Se - ñor; es el
 Fur - rows lie o - pen for God's cre - a - tive task: this, the
 "A vir - gin moth - er will bear Em - man - u - el"; she con -
 new high - ways o - pened, new pro - to - cols de - clared. Al - most
 This same Lord Je - sus to - day has come to live in our



mun - do que lu - cha por la li - ber - tad, re -
 la - bor of peo - ple who strug - gle to see how
 ceived him, "God with us," our broth - er, whose birth re -
 here! God is near - ing, in beau - ty and grace! All
 world; he is pres - ent, in neigh - bors we see our



cla - ma jus - ti - cia y bus - ca la ver - dad. dar - nos li - ber - tad.
 God's truth and jus - tice set ev - 'ry - bod - y free.
 stores hope and cour - age to chil - dren of this earth.
 clear ev - 'ry gate - way, in haste, come out in haste!
 Je - sus is with us, and ev - er sets us free.

A Great Expectation

When God's people were in distress, Micah delivered a promise from God: a new leader will be born in Bethlehem who will bring peace to Israel and to lands beyond Israel.

SECOND LESSON: Micah 5:2-5

Larissa Lueck

O Little Town of Bethlehem

***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.***

***O Holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel!***

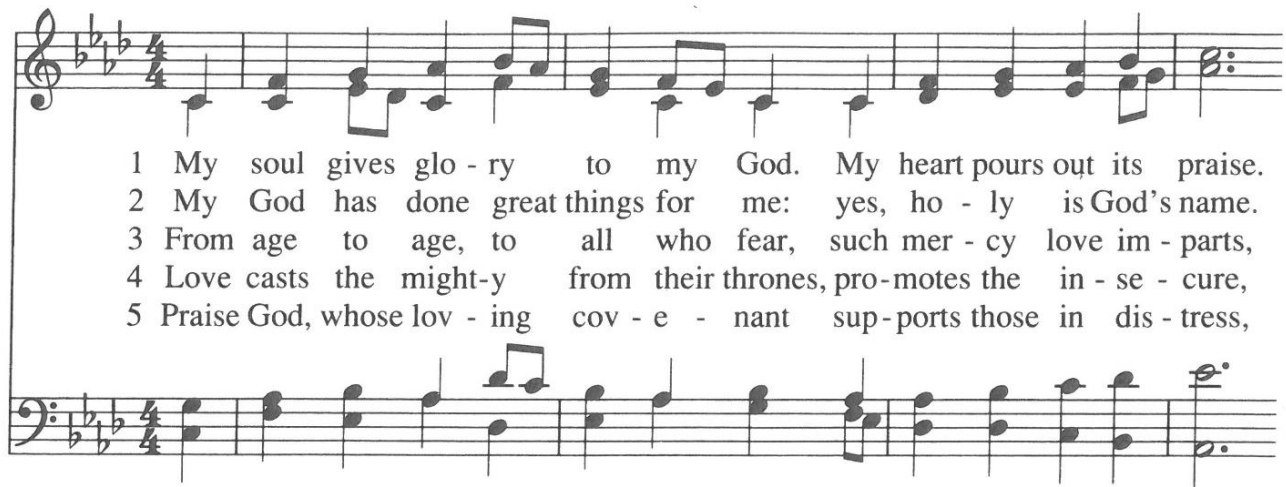
Anticipation of a New Birth

Gabriel, God's messenger, announced that the promised leader would be born to Mary, who was engaged to Joseph, a descendant of King David. Mary answered with a powerful statement of hope and trust.

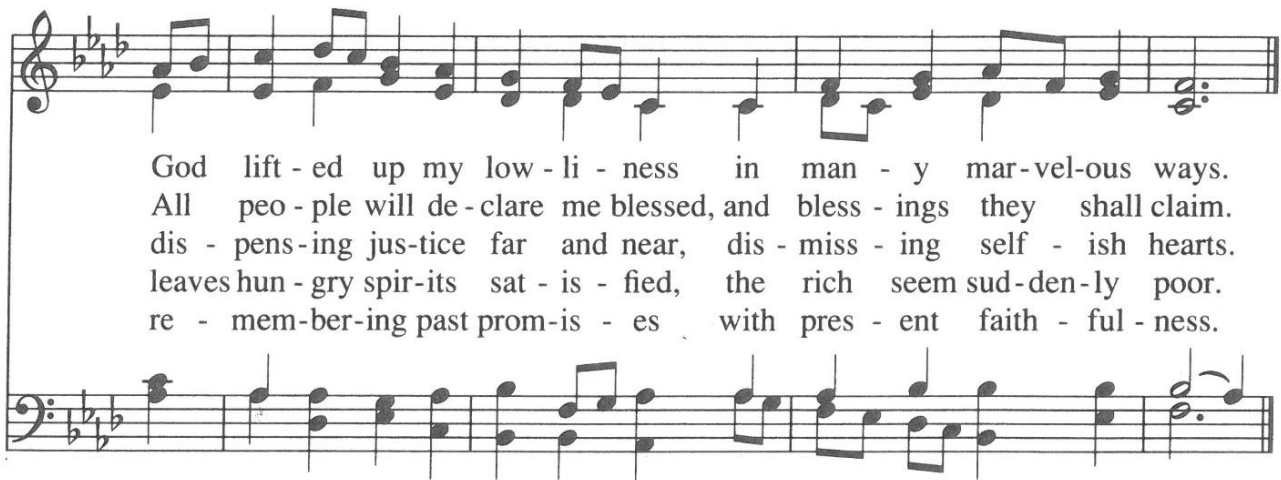
THIRD LESSON: Luke 1:26-35, 38

Mitch and Rhett Theisen

My Soul Gives Glory to My God



1 My soul gives glo - ry to my God. My heart pours out its praise.
2 My God has done great things for me: yes, ho - ly is God's name.
3 From age to age, to all who fear, such mer - cy love im - parts,
4 Love casts the might-y from their thrones, pro-motes the in - se - cure,
5 Praise God, whose lov - ing cov - e - nant sup-ports those in dis - tress,



God lift - ed up my low - li - ness in man - y mar-vel-ous ways.
All peo - ple will de - clare me blessed, and bless - ings they shall claim.
dis - pens-ing jus-tice far and near, dis - miss - ing self - ish hearts.
leaves hun - gry spir-its sat - is - fied, the rich seem sud-den-ly poor.
re - mem-ber-ing past prom-is - es with pres - ent faith - ful - ness.

Jesus the Christ is Born

Against the backdrop of political leaders and taxes, Jesus is born in a stable in Bethlehem, the City of David. News of Jesus' birth rang out over the hills and across the heavens.

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Rev. Chris Myers

"Great Joy" by Kate DiCamillo

FOURTH LESSON: Luke 2:1-20

Amy and Stella Theisen

Away in a Manger

*Away in a manger, no crib for His 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.
The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love You, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.*

The Word Becomes Flesh

With beautiful poetry, John proclaims that God took on human form and entered the world, bringing light, grace, and truth.

FIFTH LESSON: John 1:1-5, 14

Murphy Beatty

SPECIAL MUSIC

Of the Father's Love Begotten

Jamie Mills, Solo

PRAYERS

On this Christmas Eve, let our prayers bring together Bethlehem 2,000 years ago and our world today. Let us come together as God's people shaped by a night long ago and far away.

Gracious God, we pray that powerful nations not abuse the poor, or leave them homeless with no place to turn. Lord have mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray that young mothers not be overlooked, turned away in disgrace, or be without help and support. Lord have mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray that doors will not shut on anyone who needs a welcome or a place to belong. Lord have mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray that shepherds and sheep and all of creation need not be afraid. Lord have mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray as the angels sang, "Peace on earth!" We long for peace to come to individuals, families, neighborhoods, communities, and nations. Lord have mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray that wise men and wise women will find their way to places of conflict, to laboratories, to classrooms, to public meetings, to gatherings of citizens intent on upholding the well-being of all. Lord have mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray that children will be protected from all those who seek to harm them. We pray that every child would be treasured, just as we treasure the baby laid to rest in a manger. Lord have mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray that this Christmas, we will meet the child asleep in the manger, commit ourselves to living in his way, and be his body at work in the world today...

We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus who taught us to pray saying...

...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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

COMMUNION

(All Christians, regardless of denomination, tradition or age are welcome at the table of our Lord.)

Invitation to the Supper

L: In Christ, the hope of the prophets, the songs of the angels, the yearnings of all people for peace, come true. For in the Christ Child, the son of Mary, we come close to God, and God comes even closer to us.

The Great Thanksgiving

L: The Lord be with you.

P: **And also with you.**

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

P: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

L: We offer you praise, Holy God, for it is right and good and a joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth. On this holy night, we remember that Christ was born in Bethlehem: God revealed in human form, the baby in a manger, the refugee on the Egypt road. In Christ, you came to us, lived with us, and still are with us now. We thank you for the gift of this child, born to save all people from sin and death. As the angels sang glory to you in the highest and peace to your people on earth, so we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Angels We Have Heard on High

***Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, echo back their joyous strains.***

***Glo----ri-a in ex-cel-sis De-o,
Glo----ri-a in ex-cel-sis De-o.***

The Words of Institution

L: Therefore with all your witnesses in heaven and on earth, we rejoice in this holy meal as we remember the mystery of faith:

All: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Prayer of Consecration

Distribution of the Elements

Hymns during the distribution of the elements:

What Child Is This, Who, Laid to Rest

What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?

Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?

Refrain: *This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;*

Haste, haste to bring him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?

Good Christian, fear; for sinners here the silent Word is pleading. Refrain

So bring him incense, gold and myrrh, come peasant, king to own him;

The King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him. Refrain

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

***Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
Now give heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before him bow, asleep within the manger now.
Christ is born today, Christ is born today!***

***Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
Now you know of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!
God has opened heaven's door, and you are blessed forevermore.
Christ was born for this, Christ was born for this!***

***Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
Now you need not fear the grave: Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save, Christ was born to save!***

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

***Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
you who sang creation's story, now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King.***

***Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing, yonder shines the infant light:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King.***

***Sages, leave your contemplations brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great desire of nations, you have seen the natal star:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King.***

***Saints before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear,
suddenly the Lord, descending, here among us shall appear:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King.***

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We give you thanks, most Gracious God, that you have given us your love in this holy gospel feast and have refreshed us by your Holy Spirit. Now strengthen us in joyful service to all the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Joy to the World

***Joy to the world! The Lord is come: Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.***

***Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns: Let all their songs employ;
While field and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.***

***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.***

Let us pray. The songs of joy ring out: He has come! Jesus is born! Long ago, Jesus came into our world, bringing together heaven to earth that we might know God and live in God's way. In the darkness of this night we sing:

***LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES**

Silent Night, Holy Night

***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, Son of God, love's pure light,
Radiant streams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at thy birth, Jesus, Lord at thy birth.***

***Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light,
With the angels let us sing, alleluia to our King,
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.***

***DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING**

May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the faith of Joseph, the joy of angels, the eagerness of shepherds, the determination of the Magi and the peace of the Christ child. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord your God. **Amen.**

(Please extinguish your candles before you leave)

POSTLUDE

Assisting in tonight's worship service are:

Organist: *Marsha Pearson*

Pastor: *Rev. Chris Myers*

December 24..... Christmas Eve Services of Lessons and Carols
4:00 pm Family Service with Communion
11:00 pm Family Service with Choir and Communion

December 26..... 10:00 am Worship Service
..... No Adult Forum
..... No Sunday School
11:00 am Coffee Fellowship

January 2..... 10:00 am Worship Service
..... No Adult Forum
..... No Sunday School
11:00 am Coffee Fellowship

Treasurer's Report

	<u>Dec 19, 2021</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Budget Income	\$ 5,875	\$ 462,505
Budget Requirements	\$ 9,262	\$ 472,362

Note about offering: During the pandemic we are not passing the offering plate. We thankfully receive your gifts, tithes and offerings in the offering plate on the back table. Your generosity is the engine that powers our church community. Thank you.



Offering QR Code

1. On your mobile device, open your Camera app or QR Code app
2. Point your camera at the QR Code
3. Click the tab 'Give Online'

DEDICATION OF POINSETTIAS

Margo Bartness	In memory of Terry Bartness In honor of Emily Bartness Stifter In honor of Nan Bartness Stifter In honor of Tammy and Mike Stifter
Yvonne Benson	In memory of Dave Benson In honor of Chuck and Ruth Anne White
Eunice Filkins, Sippel Family and Beatty Family	In memory of Dan Filkins
Patricia Graves	In memory of Lyle and Edith Graves In memory of Clarence and Marcella Martin
Traci Hagberg	In memory of Ted and Jean Hagberg
Suzanne Hagen	In memory of Margaret and Norris Johnson
Betty Most Baugher	In memory of Barb Most In honor of Tillie Most
Deb and Jeff Hoffman and Nancy Neu	In memory of Donald Neu
Scott and Ann Jameson	In memory of Gene Jameson
Barb Mahoney	In memory of Terry and Mark Mahoney
Betty Most and Jena Most	In memory of Tille Most In memory of Barb Most
The Myers Family	In memory of William and Elizabeth Sortor In memory of Vernon and Hattie Myers
Scott and Ann Nelson	In memory of Orv and Sylvia Nelson In memory of Jack and Janie Swanson
Marsha Pearson	In memory of Marshall & Vonita Ward, Bob & Sadie Pearson, Patti Haigh, Maynard Pearson
Peter and Natasha Rayne	In memory of Benny Macnack and Genevieve Loomis
Jean Smith	In memory of Marlyn and Bernice Mohr In memory of Lois Smith
Karri Van Dell	In honor of Peggy Thompson
Randy and Diane Welsh	In memory of Diane's sister, Nancy Hines
Mary and Pete Yaeger	In memory of James Franz

Worship on the Day of Epiphany

January 6, 2022

The twelfth day of Christmas is The Day of Epiphany which marks the arrival of the three magi in Bethlehem to visit the Christ Child.

Please join us for evening worship on January 6, 2022, at 6:30 pm, to celebrate Epiphany. Together we will sing “Unfailing Light” an evening service of holy communion, composed by Marty Haugen (of *Holden Village Evening Prayer* fame). We will light candles to chase away the darkness, share bread, drink from the cup, and then enjoy cranberry cake with hot butter sauce. Please come. Let us know you are coming to be sure we have enough dessert (you don’t want to miss the dessert).

