

December 24, 2024; 5 pm  
Christmas Eve

## **We Gather Together**

**Gathering Music:** *please join our cantors Carol W., Kristina A. and Nancy P. in singing our Gathering Music*

GTG 123 "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" vs. 1 & 2

GTG 143 "Angels, from the Realms of Glory" vs. 1 & 4

GTG 132 "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" vs. 1 & 3

GTG 119 "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" vs. 1 & 3

***Welcome** to tonight's special Service of Worship. Whether you are with us in person, joining us live on Zoom or watching on our YouTube channel, we are glad you are here. For those in person, please use the time before worship to fill in the Friendship Pad in your pew. We extend a special welcome to our visitors, and if you have not already received your welcome gift, please pick one up as you leave the sanctuary after worship.*

*Copies of the Glory to God hymnal and Common English Bibles are available at the back of the sanctuary for your use during worship.*

**Welcome**

*Rev. Dr. Craig R. Alwin*

### **Ringing of the Bell and entrance of the Light of Christ**

#### **Lighting of the Christ Candle**

*Braatz Family*

Reader One: Beloved, today we welcome the Christ Child, the fulfillment of our joy, as we proclaim with the prophet Isaiah, "For 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" (Isaiah 9:6).

**Congregation: Christ our joy has come near. Emmanuel, God with us, has come to dwell with us as a tiny baby. "His authority shall grow continually, 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" (Isaiah 9:7).**

Reader Two: We light these candles as a sign of Christ coming to dwell with us, to live in the neighborhood of vulnerable humanity as a vulnerable child. May the light of Christ warm our hearts and light our way as we share the joy of God's salvation wherever we go.

*Light all the candles of the Advent Yule Log as we sing "O Little Town of Bethlehem".*

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/come-let-us-adore-him-advent-candle-lighting-liturgy-2024>

### **Sung Response GTG 121 "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (vs 1)**

#### **\*Litany**

*Darren B.*

God promised to save God's world.

**And the people believed.**

God sent the prophets to remind them of the covenant of trust and love.

**And the people believed.**

In the fullness of time, God's promise became incarnate in the life of Mary.

**Mary and Joseph believed.**

Those who were the least and the lost received good news.

**And they believed.**

We are called to open our hearts, spirits, and minds to God's Good News

**That, believing, we may be witnesses to God's great love. AMEN.**

#### **\*Prayer**

*Emily H.*

Lord, remind us that, like Mary, each one of us is a bearer of your Good News.

We are called to proclaim hope, peace, joy, and love in your name. Open our hearts and our spirits today to receive with great joy the love that you have for us. For we ask this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

### **\*Sung Response GTG 133 "O Come All Ye Faithful"**

## **God's Word Is Proclaimed**

### **Old Testament Lesson Isaiah 9:2-7**

*Darren B.*

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.

You have made the nation great;

you have increased its joy.

They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest,

as those who divide plunder rejoice.

As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke that burdened them,

the staff on their shoulders,

and the rod of their oppressor.

Because every boot of the thundering warriors,

and every garment rolled in blood

will be burned, fuel for the fire.

A child is born to us, a son is given to us,

and authority will be on his shoulders.

He will be named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

There will be vast authority and endless peace

for David's throne and for his kingdom,

establishing and sustaining it

with justice and righteousness

now and forever.

The zeal of the Lord of heavenly forces will do this.

### **Sung Response GTG 113 "Angels We Have Heard on High" v. 1**

### **Psalm 96:1-4, 10**

*Emily H.*

Sing to the Lord a new song!

Sing to the Lord, all the earth!

Sing to the Lord! Bless his name!

Share the news of his saving work every single day!

Declare God's glory among the nations;

declare his wondrous works among all people

because the Lord is great and so worthy of praise.

He is awesome beyond all other gods.

Tell the nations, “The Lord rules!  
Yes, he set the world firmly in place;  
it won’t be shaken.  
He will judge all people fairly.”

**Sung Response GTG 113** “Angels We Have Heard on High” v. 2

**New Testament Lesson Luke 2:1-20** (Common English Bible)

In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. Since Joseph belonged to David’s house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David’s city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord’s angel stood before them, the Lord’s glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

The angel said, “Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, “Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.”

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go right now to Bethlehem and see what’s happened. Let’s confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.” They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

**Sung Response GTG 113** “Angels We Have Heard on High” v. 3

**Children's Time**

*Jennifer Zander*

**Sung Response:** Happy Birthday Dear Jesus

**Meditation** "A New Song"

*Rev. Dr. Craig Alwin*

## **We Respond to God's Word**

**Prayers of the People**

**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.  
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who have sinned against us.  
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.  
Amen.**

**Offering** "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

*Kristina A., pianist*

**Offertory GTG 145** "What Child is This" vs. 3

**\*Offertory Prayer**

**Music Solo:** "Little Drummer Boy"

*Evelyn S., pianist*

**Christmas Eve Lovefeast with Milk and Cookies**

Modeled after the Moravian Lovefeast (*see more info at the end of the bulletin*), our Christmas Eve Lovefeast is a special service when we share a simple meal together. Throughout the lovefeast, Christmas carols are played and sung. During the distribution of the lovefeast, the servers bring in trays of heart-shaped cookies wrapped in napkins and pass them down the pews. When they are finished, they come back in with small cups of chocolate milk. During the sharing of the lovefeast, you may offer words or gestures of Christ's peace and love to one another as a sign of our unity in this household of ministry.

GTG 146 Gentle Mary Laid Her Child  
God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen      *Kristina A., pianist*  
GTG 147 The First Nowell

**\*We Spread the Light of Christ**

(The ushers will light the candles of persons on the aisles. Each person will then light the candle of the next person down the pew. For safety, please DO NOT TIP A LIT CANDLE. Please tip the unlit candle toward the lighted candle.)

**\*Hymn GTG 122 "Silent Night"**

Jesus Christ, the Light of the World!  
**Jesus Christ, the Light of the World!**

*(Please extinguish your candles)*

**\*Hymn GTG 134 "Joy to the World!"**

**\*Blessing**

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me won't walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Jesus also said, "You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, so they may praise your Father in Heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16)

Turn to someone next to you and share this blessing with each other:

**May the light of Christ shine upon you,  
and be reflected upon all those you meet.**

**\*Hymn GTG 136 "Go, Tell It on the Mountain" v. 1**

**Postlude "Go Tell It"**

*arr. by Aaron David Miller*

## **ABOUT OUR CHRISTMAS EVE MORAVIAN LOVEFEAST**

Lovefeasts originated in the first gathering of Christians after Pentecost. As the early Christians met and broke bread together in token of their fellowship and love, so the members of the Moravian Church family have made it their custom to celebrate special occasions by sharing with friends a simple meal, a “lovefeast.” The name of the service is a literal translation of the New Testament word “agape.” A lovefeast seeks to remove social barriers and strengthen the spirit of unity and goodwill among all people.

The early believers met and broke bread together, thereby signifying their union and equality. These meals of the church family were associated with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, which followed them but are not to be confused with the Lord’s Supper. They were called agape, from the Greek word for love, that is for the highest type of spiritual love. Gradually the agape lost its devotional character, and toward the end of the fourth century the Church gave it up.

The lovefeast of Apostolic times was resuscitated in its original simplicity by the Moravian Church in 1727. After the memorable celebration of the holy communion on August 13, seven groups of the participants continued to talk over the great spiritual blessing which they had experienced and were reluctant to separate and return to their own homes for the noonday meal. Count Zinzendorf, sensing the situation, sent them food from his manor house, and each group partook together, continuing in prayer, religious conversation, and the singing of hymns. This incident reminded Zinzendorf of the primitive agape, and the idea was fostered until lovefeasts became a custom in Moravian life.

The Christmas Eve Lovefeast was brought to First Presbyterian Church of Fond du Lac around 25 years ago by Rev. Barbara Carmichael and continues to be a practice shared in a spirit of reverence and joy, reminding us that Christ is present in our lives, especially in those moments when we break bread and share a meal together.

This information was adapted from the following websites:

<https://www.moravian.org/2018/11/the-lovefeast/>

<https://moravianmusic.org/what-is-a-moravian-lovefeast/>