**St. John United Church of Christ**

***“In Christ We Live, Celebrate, & Serve”***

December 24, 2020 Christmas Eve

3:00 p.m. Worship (618) 877-6060

2901 Nameoki Road Granite City, IL 62040

E-stjohnucc2901gc@yahoo.com Web-stjohnuccgranitecity.com

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

BELLS CALLING TO WORSHIP

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

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 Introduction and Reading of Scripture from Isaiah 9:6;

 Luke 2:10, 14; and Romans 5:5

 Lighting of the Candle

 Song: ***“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”*** Verse 1

***Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King: peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!” Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;***

***with th’angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!” Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King.”***

 Unison Prayer

***We thank you, God, for your gift of Jesus Christ to the entire world. We thank you that Christ’s coming makes hope, peace, love, and joy possible for every person in every nation. Encourage us to do our part to bring goodwill and peace to our families, our churches, our neighborhoods, and the world. Now let your Spirit put us in touch with you, the living God, through the words and music we hear. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.***

PRELUDE *Yuletide Echoes* Hodson

CALL TO WORSHIP Adapted from Isaiah 9 and Luke 2

The people of Isaiah’s time who walked in darkness saw a great light;

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***Those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light shined.***

God increased the people’s joy, and they rejoiced to say:

***A child has been born for us, a son given to us;***

***authority rests upon his shoulders;***

The shepherds of Mary and Joseph’s time saw the glory of the Lord shine around them, and they were terrified. But an angel said to them:

***Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:”***

In our time, we come to see, and hear, and celebrate, the glorious light shining for us.

***For to us is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord!***

O come, let us worship and praise God with all who hear and rejoice to say:

 ***“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”***

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 all 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.***

UNISON PRAYER

 Let us pray together:

***Generations of descendants, people of every time and place, worship and adore you, O Lord God. Fill us with your Spirit now, as we receive your timeless message of salvation. Bring light into our eyes, and the angels’***

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***songs to our mouths, as we open our hearts to celebrate your gift of Life, now and forever. Amen***

CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS POEM

*“Why Do the Bells of Christmas Ring?”* By Lydia Avery Coonley Ward

HYMN ***“Away in a Manger”***

***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.***

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING Isaiah 11:1-9

SOLO  *O Holy Night*

FIRST GOSPEL READING Luke 2:1-7

HYMN ***“What Child Is This”***

***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?***

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

***haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!***

SECOND GOSPEL READING Luke 2:8-20

HYMN ***“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.***

***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.***

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REFLECTION

HYMN ***“It Came upon the Midnight Clear”***

***It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold;***

***“Peace on the earth, goodwill to all, from heaven’s all gracious King”:***

***the world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.***

***Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled,***

***and still their heavenly music floats o’er all the weary world; above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hovering wing, and ever o’er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.***

CHRISTMAS PRAYER AND 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.***

ORGAN RESPONSE *Angels We Have Heard on High*

STEWARDSHIP INVITATION & BLESSING

 Let us pray together:

***The gifts we give represent our joy as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, and our commitment to overcome the fears and shadows of life, by shining your Light, Holy One. Let us join the shepherds in returning home, glorifying and praising God to everyone; and like Mary, treasuring the promise of salvation in our heart. Amen.***

RESPONSE ***“O Little Town of Bethlehem”***

***O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!***

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***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.***

THE LIGHTING OF OUR CANDLES



HYMN ***“Silent Night”***

(Peacefully sing or hum the first verse in German, followed by the entire carol in English.)

 ***Stille nacht! Heilige nacht! Alles schlaft, einsam wacht***

 ***Nur das traute, hoch heilige Paar***

 ***Holder Knab’ im lockigen haar,***

 ***Schlaf in himmlischer ruh, Schlaf in himmlischer ruh.***

 ***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 beams from thy holy face,***

 ***With the dawn of redeeming grace,***

 ***Jesus, Lord, at thy birth; Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.***

BENEDICTION AND EXTINGUISHING OF CANDLES

RINGING OF THE CHRISTMAS BELLS

\*POSTLUDE *The Hallelujah Chorus* Handel

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Tonight, Christmas Eve, there will be a lovely **luminary lit manger scene** on our front church steps. Please enter our main parking lot entrance, drive-by the front of the church, and leave by the cemetery exit, between dusk and 10:00 p.m. May the beauty bring joy and peace as we celebrate the Light of the World shining among us in these days.

We joyfully greet our everyone on this Christmas Eve! May we share the light that shines from that first Christmas Eve for all the world. If you do not have a church home and would like to know more about St. John United Church of Christ, please call the office at 618-877-6060.

A donation toward **BULLETINS** for our Christmas Eve Service has been given in loving memory of his parents, **Alvin Henry Willaredt** and **Margaret Willaredt Rush**, and his sisters, **Jackie Willaredt** and **Cheryl Prough**, by Steven Willaredt.

The **CHRIST CANDLE** is given in loving memory of **Ray** and **Dody Gaines** by family.

The **LARGE POINSETTIAS ON THE ALTAR** are placed in memory of **Raymond and Marian Willaredt** by the children.

We offer a special word of **APPRECIATION:**

 To Jim Watson, Karen Gaines, and Katie Jones for their

 technology work to make this service available through

 Zoom, Facebook, Email, and our Web page.

 To Ritch Alexander for his musical gifts.

 To Roni and Dave Douglas for their decorating talents.

The **Christmas Offering** will be placed in the General Fund to support the ministry of Good News God has entrusted to us. Please mail or drop-off donations to St. John UCC, 2901 Nameoki Rd., Granite City, IL 62040.

The Staff of St. John United Church of Christ wishes you a very **Merry Christmas**, and a **Most Blessed New Year!**

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**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

**Isaiah 11:1-9**

**A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.**

**Luke 2:1-20**

**2 In those days a decree went out from Emperor 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 for them in the inn.**

**8In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9Then an angel of**

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**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, 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, praising God and saying,**

**14“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
    and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”**

**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. 19But 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, as it had been told them.**

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In Celebration of the life of our beautiful Emily Ann

 By David and Veronica Douglas

In Gratitude for our granddaughter, Lydia

 By Debbie and Daniel Winkle

In Gratitude for our funny pets, Honey and Horace

 By Revs. Karla Frost and Charles Preston

In Honor and blessings of our children and grandchildren, Josh, Acacia, Milo and Charlie Douglas

 By David and Veronica Douglas

In Honor of Karen Frost

 By Revs. Karla Frost and Charles Preston

In Loving Memory of Muriel Kratz

 By the Kriegel Family

In Loving Memory of Dick Oliver

 By the Kriegel Family

In Loving Memory of dear, departed loved ones

 By the Kriegel family

In Loving Memory of Grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Chester Lambert

 By Beverly Partney

In Loving Memory of Parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Parmley

 By Beverly Partney

In Loving Memory of Royal and Helen Preston, Ken Frost, and Janet Frost

 By Revs. Karla Frost and Charles Preston

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In Loving Memory of my parents, Bill and Bernice Duckworth

 By Leesa Boyer

In Loving Memory of my husband, Patrick L. Boyer

 By Leesa Boyer

In Loving Memory of my brothers, Bill and Chuck Duckworth

 By Leesa Boyer

In Loving Memory of Jake Jatho

 By Debbie and Daniel Winkle

In Loving Memory of Daniel and Marion Winkle

 By Debbie and Daniel Winkle

In Loving Memory of our parents,

 By Bob and Carol Braundmeier

In Loving Memory of our son, Kyle

 By Carol and Bob Braundmeier

In Loving Memory of Ervin and Eva Mueller

 By Jarrod, Rachel, Eleanor, Allison and Benjamin Reynolds

In Loving Memory of Otis and Lois Hollenbeck

 By Jarrod, Rachel, Eleanor, Allison and Benjamin Reynolds

In Loving Memory of Raymond and Jane Lux

 By Mike, MaryJo, Beth and Patrick Seibold

In Loving Memory of Ed and Della Seibold

 By Mike, MaryJo, Beth and Patrick Seibold

In Loving Memory of our brother, Steven Suess

 By David and Veronica Douglas

In Loving Memory of our parents, Richard and Thelma Suess and Robert and Rose Douglas

 By David and Veronica Douglas