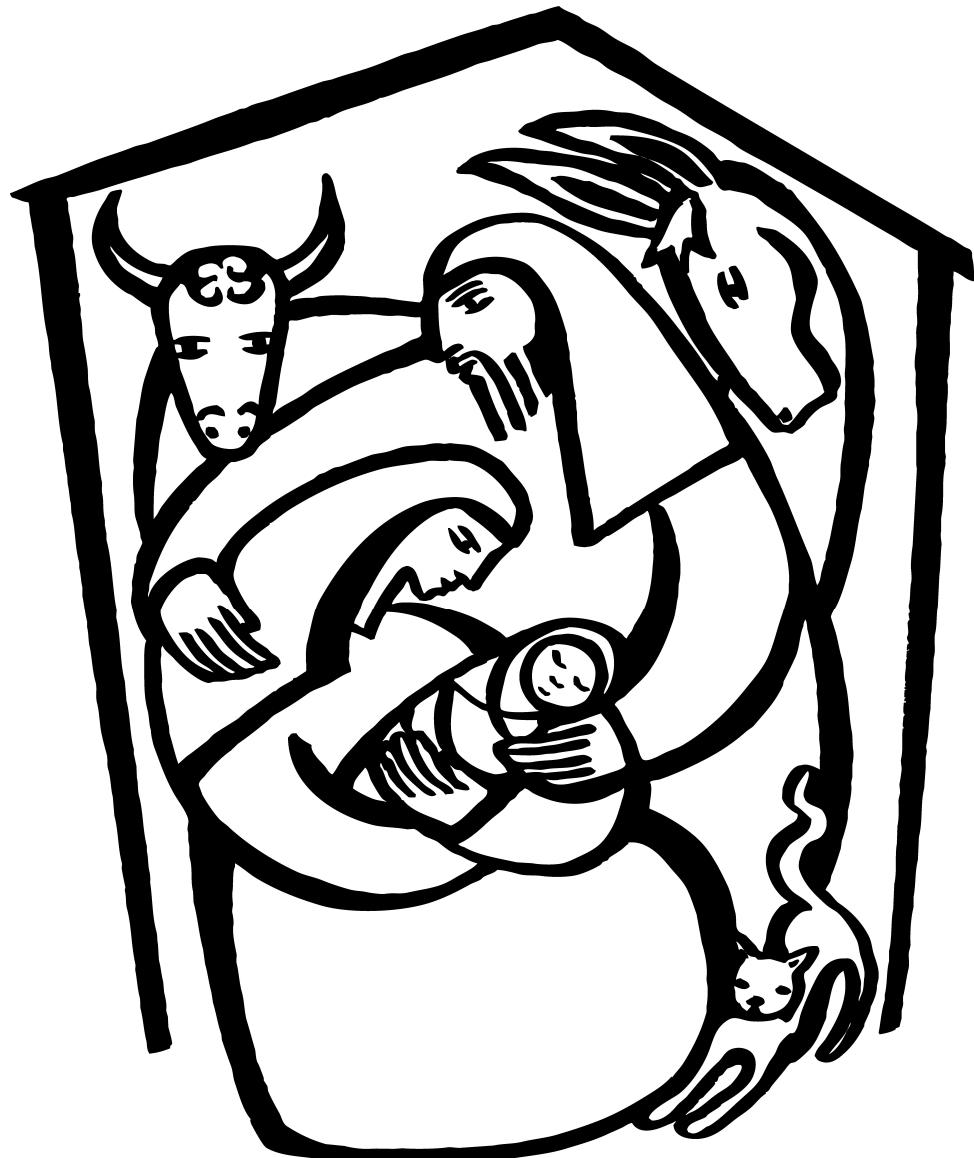


***Tuesday, December 24, 2024
Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service***



Immanuel United Church of Christ
118 Oak Street, Neenah, Wisconsin 54956

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Tom Fritz

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God Is Still Speaking

Welcome to Immanuel UCC!

*Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey,
You are welcome here.*

PRELUDE

Spencer Jones, Music Coordinator

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor: Those who lived in darkness have seen a great light;

People: and that light was the fulfillment of all that God had promised.

Pastor: The star of Bethlehem proclaimed God's love, and led shepherds and Wise Men to the Christ-Child.

People: Today we, too, follow that star, that the light of God's love may illumine our world once more.

Pastor: Today we re-tell the Christmas story through Scripture and song, and rejoice in all that God has done, and is doing.

**People: Today we seek to become the story, that our lives may reflect God's love into the dark corners of our world.
Come, Child of Hope, fill our hearts with your love as we celebrate your birth!**

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

HYMN NO. 245: "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel

And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel Shall come to thee,
O Israel!

2. O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer

Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Refrain:

3. O come, Thou Wisdom from on high

And order all things, far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show
And cause us in her ways to go.

Refrain:

4. O come, Desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind.
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease;
Fill the while world with heaven's peace.

Refrain:

SCRIPTURE:

Micah 5:2-5a

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace. If the Assyrians come into our land and tread upon our soil, we will raise against them seven shepherds and eight installed as rulers.

SCRIPTURE:

Jeremiah 33:14-16

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'

HYMN NO. 250: "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

vs. 1 & 4

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.

4. O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend on 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.

RESPONSIVE READING: Psalm 89:1-2 (W=Women, M=Men)

W: I will sing of your steadfast love forever, O Lord;

M: with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

W: I will declare that your steadfast love is established forever;

M: that your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And 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.

HYMN NO. 262 "Away in a Manger"

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 Baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus- no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
And stay by my side until morning is nigh,

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

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:8-20

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

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

When 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.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

SOLOIST: “Angels, We Have Heard on High” Steve Brandt

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise man from the East came to Jerusalem asking, “Where is the child who has been born King of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judah for so it has been written by the prophet:

‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’ ”

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

HYMN NO. 288: “*We Three Kings*”

1. We three kings of Orient are;
Bearing gifts we traverse a far
Field and fountain, moor and mountain
Following yonder star.

Refrain:

O star of wonder, star of night,
Star of royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.

2. Born a King on Bethlehem’s plain;
Gold I bring to crown Him again,
King forever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign.

Refrain:

3. Frankincense to offer have I;
Incense own a Deity nigh.
Prayer and praising, all men raising,
Worship Him, God on high.

Refrain:

4. Myrrh is mine: its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom
Sorr'wing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
Sealing in the stone cold tomb.

Refrain:

5. Glorious now behold Him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice;
Alleluia, alleluia!
Earth to heav'n replies.

Refrain:

OFFERING

OFFERTORY

UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

In the Spirit of Emmanuel, we bring our lives and our gifts to you, O Lord. Bless our tithes and offerings, and us in your service, that together we may proclaim your love throughout the world. Amen!

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Joys, Concerns, and Celebrations

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass 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 and ever. Amen!

SOLOIST: “O Holy Night” Heather Hessler

SCRIPTURE: Luke 22:14-20

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he said, "Take this, divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you in the new covenant in my blood."

INVITATION TO COMMUNION AND THE PRAYER OF INSTITUTION

COMMUNION

(For your choice, we offer both wine and grape juice. The wine is red, and the grape juice is white. Choose according to your personal needs.)

UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

We give you thanks, O Lord, that once again you have refreshed us at your Table. Strengthen our faith; increase our love for one another; and send us into the world to shine in someone's darkness; bringing hope to someone in despair; healing those who have been hurt on life's journey; as we proclaim your love to all the world. Amen!

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

Today we end our service by candle light. Ushers will come down the center aisle to light the candles of those sitting on the aisle—who will pass the light to others in the pew. Remember to tip unlit candles to meet the flame of those already lit, which will prevent wax from dripping on your clothes. When all the candles are lit, the lights will dim, and we will sing.

HYMN NO. 253: "Silent Night, Holy Night"

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;
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia to our King.
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!
3. 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!
4. 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.

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

POSTLUDES

Poinsettias in memory of:

Bob & Jean Vande Hey

Our Parents

Karen Wolf

Our Parents

Karen Koller

Family members, Husband

Karen Gregersen

Husband, Parents, Brother, Sister

Dawn Mickler & Barry Halsey

Our Parents, Sister, Bill