



Peace on Earth Good Will to All

*Christmas Eve Candle light Service
The Congregational Church of Westborough
United Church of Christ
December 24, 2011*

Light of the World, open our eyes to amazement. Open our imaginations to possibility. Open our souls to your divine healing presence. You are in us, and around us uniting us to one another. Come beloved child of humanity, and unite us as one human family. Amen.

SERVICE OF PREPARATION

**The Congregation is invited to stand.*

PRELUDE

INTROIT

WELCOME

Rev. Dr. Dirkje F. Legerstee

SENTENCES

Alex Reynolds

One: Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

All: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace and goodwill to all people on earth!

SUNG RESPONSE HYMN #34

Glory to God

GLORY TO GOD

Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia.

Glory to God, glory to God, glory in the highest.

Glory to God, glory to God, alleluia, alleluia!

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Rev. Elaine S. Gaetani

One: When the time was right, God sent the son

Women: sent him and suckled him.

Men: Reared him and risked him,

Women: filled him with laughter and tears and compassion,

Men: filled him with anger, love and devotion.

One: Unwelcomed child, refugee and runaway,

All: Christ is God's own son.

One: Lover of the unlovable, toucher of the untouchable, forgiver of the unforgiveable.

All: Christ is God's own son.

One: Loved by women, feared by many, befriended by the weak, despised by the strong, deserted by his listeners, betrayed by his friends, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, writing heaven's pardon over earth's mistakes,

All: Christ is God's own son.

One: The Word became flesh:

All: He came among us, He was one of us.

**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;**

Refrain:

*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;**

Refrain

**Child, for us sinners poor and in the manger,
We would embrace thee, with love and awe;
Who would not love thee, loving us so dearly?**

Refrain

*PRAYER OF INVOCATION

O God of the Baby of Bethlehem, we come into your presence with praise and thanksgiving. We hear the glad tidings of the angels' voices. We come to experience this good news of great joy for all the people. As the shepherds traveled to Bethlehem, we have traveled here – excited, expectant, hopeful; a bit skeptical. Let the words of sacred scripture seep into our hearts, to be treasured and pondered anew. We are here; we are ready, O God! Let the light of your love break forth! Amen.

LIGHTING THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE

Confirmants Katey Allen, Katie Shaffert, Robert Herstedt, Andrew McGrath

One: We relight four candles representing the four weeks of Advent as we awaited the blessed hope of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Two: These candles symbolize gifts of Jesus Christ to us: Hope; peace; joy; and love.

Three: Tonight we light the Christ Candle: the candle of Hope made real in the Son of God come to earth at Christmas. In Christ, the grace of God has appeared bringing the good news of salvation for all.

All: **Come to us, Holy Christ be born in our hearts, in our minds, and in our lives. May the light of your love be kindled in us, and lead us to the shining truth, of God with us, God for us, and God within us. May your peace fill our lives, fill the spaces between us and fill the universe with Shaolm. Amen.**

**Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me;
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.**

**With God our Creator, children all are we.
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.
Let peace begin with me; let this be the moment now.
with every step I take Let this be my solemn vow:
to take each moment and live ach moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.**

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

Let us create a space for the Christ Child, and kneel with hearts of humility before God.

***RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF CONFESSION** (*From Cloth in the Cradle*)

Leader: We must confess.

All: We suspect angels and disbelieve good news.

***THE LORD'S PRAYER** (*Debts*)

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.

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

One: God is faithful and just. God judges all people with equity. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness -- on them light has shined. In the glow of God's grace, you are forgiven! Let this revelation brighten your soul! Forgiven and forgiving, carry the light of Christ's love to an aching and ailing world!

All: Amen.

***PRAISE HYMN # 155**

Angels We Have Heard on High

GLORIA

**Angels we have heard on high Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply Echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!**

SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

(Please remain seated for carols)

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 9:2-4; 6-7

(Bible page 555)

Maggie Reynolds

CAROL HYMN # 160

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

ES IST EIN ROS

**Lo, how a Rose e're blooming from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming,**

**As men of old have sung,
It came, a floweret bright, amid the cold of winter,
When half spent was the night.**

**Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind;
With Mary we behold it, the Virgin Mother kind.
To show God's love aright, she bore to men a Savior,
When half spent was the night.**

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 11:1-9

(Bible page 558)

Andrew McGrath

CAROL HYMN # 144

O Little Town of Bethlehem (vs. 1&3)

ST. LOUIS

**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.**

**How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts with human hearts the blessings of God's heaven.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him,
still the dear Christ enters in.**

SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:26-35, 38

(Bible page 830)

Katey Allen

CAROL HYMN # 153

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear (vs. 1&4)

CAROL

**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 men, from heavens all gracious King!"**

**The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.
For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years, shall come the time foretold,
When the new heaven and earth shall own the Prince of Peace, their King,
And the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.**

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 1:18-21

(Bible page 832)

Robert Herstedt

CAROL HYMN # 148

O Come, All Ye Faithful (verse 4)

ADESTE FIDELES

**All Hail! Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning,
O Jesus! for evermore be Thy name adored.**

**Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.**

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:8-14

(Bible page 833)

Elizabeth Anderson

CAROL HYMN # 150

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

MENDELSSOHN

**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 the angelic host proclaim: "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"**

**Christ, by highest heav'n adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come, off spring of a Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the newborn King!"**

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:15-20

(Bible page 833)

Katie Shaffert

CAROL HYMN # 151

The First Noel

THE FIRST NOEL

**The First Noel, the angel did say,
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Born is the King of Israel!
They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the east beyond them far,
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and night.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Born is the King of Israel!**

ANTHEM

What Sweeter Music

John Rutter

MEDITATION

Rev. Dr. Dirkje F. Legerstee

CAROL HYMN # 163

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

W ZLOBIE LEZY

**Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing, Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing, noels ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the babe is Lord of all.**

**Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the babe was born for you.**

A PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS

Rev. Elaine S. Gaetani

A CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING

Invitation: A verse from the hymn In the Bleak Midwinter asks, "What can I offer, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb. If I were a wise one, I would do my part. What can I offer: all my heart." As we open our purses and our pockets, may the gifts we bring be in proportion to the gratitude of our hearts at Christ's birth.

Offertory Anthem

Ding! Dong! Merrily on High

arr. Hal Hopson

*DOXOLOGY

OLD HUNDRETH

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Christ the Word in flesh born low;
Praise Holy Spirit evermore;
One God, Triune, whom we adore.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

We present these gifts to you O God, and ask that you accept them for the work of your reign of peace. On this night of marvelous gifts, help us to bring our bodies, minds, and spirits to you in the fullness of joy. For the gift of your love made flesh in Jesus, and for all your blessings of life and relationship, we give you thanks and praise. Amen.

SHARING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

We come to a special portion of tonight's service. As Christ comes bringing the light of God's love, we light our individual candles to signify our individual and collective commitment to live as Christ's faithful in the world. The light will be brought to the end of each row, tip your unlit candle into the flame so that it may take hold. Do not tip your lit candle! Pass the light along your row until every candle is lit. As the candles are lit we will join in singing.

*HYMN (seated) # 145

Silent Night, Holy Night

STILLE NACHT

**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 of thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at thy birth, Jesus Lord at thy birth.**

As the lights are dimmed, let us hold up our candles...One candle is but a flicker, but together, we create a bright flame of Christ's light in the world. Consider the beauty of our lights shining together. Christ is the light of the world and the hope of all our tomorrows! May we be witnesses of the light Christ brings.

As you gently extinguish your candle, carry the light of Jesus' love with you.

***BENEDICTION**

One: A Child is born to us! A Son is given! He is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Prince of Peace! Christ is born! Merry Christmas to all!

All: Christ is born! Merry Christmas to all!

CAROL HYMN # 143

Joy to the World

ANTIOCH

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.**

Welcome to The Congregational Church of Westborough, a United Church of Christ. If you are visiting, we invite you to fill out a Visitor Card found in the pew. Please join us Christmas morning for worship and a Carol Sing.

Greeting you this evening are **Ed and Kathy Wong**

Deacons tonight are **Lynne Caldwell** and **Pam Faustine**

Confirmands **Katie Allen, Katie Shaffert, Robert Herstedt, & Andrew McGrath** light the Christ candle.

Worship Notes: The prayer of Invocation is written by © Jeff Shrowder 1999. RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF CONFESSION (*From Cloth in the Cradle*)

The Christmas Fund is for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund.

2012 offering envelopes are available before and after the service in the Library.