

Zion Reformed United Church of Christ

December 31, 2023

11:00 A.M.

First Sunday After Christmas



*"Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars.
Praise him you highest heavens, and you waters above the skies."*

Psalm 148:3-4

Gathering Music and Bells

Sixteen Variations in d minor

Pachelbel

Greetings, Announcements

Thanks for a beautiful Christmas, Pageant, Holiday Workshop, Choir, House of Worship, etc.
Undecorate next Sunday, January 7 after worship.

Prelude

Once in Royal David's City

Henry J. Gauntlett

*Call to Worship

One: On the Second Day of Christmas we come to acknowledge the many gifts that fill our lives.

All: We are grateful for all we have received.

One: We are grateful for the gift of life, for the gift of love, for the gift of family and friends, for the gift of community.

All: We thank you God and one another for the riches of relationship.

One: As we move toward the feast of Epiphany, we await renewed revelation of who we are and who we might become.

All: Reveal Yourself to us, Holy One, as You reveal us to ourselves.

One: What gifts do we bring as we journey toward the manger?

All: May we be open to receive your revelation and have the courage and commitment to respond. Might this be our gift.

*Hymn

Our God, Our Help in Ages Past

Red #63

Unison Prayer

As we once more celebrate Your coming into this world, Jesus the Christ, we want to be open to the deep revelation available to us through your birth and your life with us and within us. Cast light on our shadows, bring hope to our fear, courage to our timidity. Together we are one strong and beloved community committed to follow your way. In your name we pray. Amen

*Choral Response

Gloria in Excelsis Deo
Gloria in Excelsis Deo
Gloria in Excelsis Deo

Scripture

Luke 2:8-14

Lector: Jean Simmons

There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger." At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: Glory to God in the heavenly heights, peace to all men and women on earth who please him. One: This is the word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

Anthem

Lo, How a Rose E're Blooming

Zion Choir

Word for Children

Mary & Joseph

Joseph: My name is Joseph and this is my wife, Mary.

Mary: We are humble folks.

Joseph: I am a carpenter from Nazareth... nothing special... We are just an ordinary couple.

Mary: But God does not seem to mind mixing with folk like us... but then you know the story well by now!

Joseph: What is not written, though, is how scared we were...

Mary: and confused...

Joseph: and if I was honest, full of doubt. Well, wouldn't you be? Angelic visitations, my wife pregnant before we... well...! And told that he was to be the one promised long ago... the Messiah... the Son of God!

Mary: It is a strange thing... even though it still frightens me to think about it... I always knew it would be all right... in here, you know, I always was sure in here!

Joseph: Through all those years, as he grew and learned, full of questions, full of passion... what a responsibility. But this I always knew; if God had chosen us, then we must be worthy, and therefore able.

Mary: That's right, no matter what, we always knew God was with us. What love! What goodness! What hope God gave.

Joseph: You could not be near Jesus without sensing it. You could not hear speak without knowing... he was the truth.

Mary: And God chose us...

*Hymn

I, the Lord of Sea and Sky (Verse 1)

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Scripture

Luke 2:15-20

Lector: Jean Simmons

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherders were impressed.

Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!

One: This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

All: Thanks be to God.

HymnI, the Lord of Sea and Sky (Verse 2)*

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A Voice**Julian of Norwich**

My name is Julian. I lived in the 14th century in Norwich. Like many women of my day, I was an Anchoress, seeking solace in the order of prayer and meditation. I loved the daily cycle of prayer. I loved the quiet moments of reflection and the beauty of worship.

My life was simple... unremarkable... Then one day in May, 1373, all that changed. God chose me... me... to bring a message of hope to our dark and frightening world.

There, where friend and foe alike were being cut down by the scourge we called Black Death, where young and old waited grimly for the bearer's wagon to take them to their grave, there God spoke to me in a series of revelations... clear as day... loud as the Crier's call they came... overwhelming... compulsive... decisive.

He showed me a little thing, the size of a hazelnut, on the palm of my hand, round like a ball. I looked at it thoughtfully and wondered, "What is it?" And the answer came, "It is all that is made." I marveled that it continued to exist and did not suddenly disintegrate; it was so small. And again my mind supplied the answer, "It exists both now and forever, because God loves it."

And therein I saw three truths: the first is that God made it; the second is that God loves it; and the third is that God sustains it.

And so it is with us, our body, mind, and soul. God will not let us go. We shall not perish. In Christ is salvation. In him we have our life... our being ... our all.

HymnI, the Lord of Sea and Sky (Verse 3)*

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A Voice**John Wesley**

My name is John Wesley. I was an Anglican priest who lived in the 18th century.

Until I was 35 years of age, I knew there was something lacking in my life. I had been part of many groups; the best known of them was the Holy Club at Oxford. Always, always, always, I was looking for one thing — to know God — personally, intimately and to know Jesus as the Christ.

No amount of rigor, method, prayer, or study sufficed. I could not find that faith for which I longed so much. Then, on May 24th, 1738, in Aldersgate Street, it happened. I felt my heart warmed with the inner glow of the Spirit, and I knew I did trust in Christ, and Christ alone for my salvation; an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of

sin and death.

For the next 50 years I purposed to tell the world of this wonderful Savior. From England to the Americas I sang, preached, and argued for the souls of others. The movement I began has now spread to the four corners of the earth. I could never have imagined it would be so... but let this be known... it is not the Methodist Church or our hymns for which I would be remembered... No!... Only this Christ is God's means of salvation... and in him alone can we trust.

God is love, and in Christ we have seen salvation. May he be glorified forever!

***Hymn**

God Moves in a Mysterious Way

Black #412

***Litany of Christmas**

One: If there is no cross in the manger,

All: there is no Christmas

One: If the Babe doesn't become the Adult,

All: there is no Bethlehem star.

One: If there is no commitment in us,

All: there are no Wise Men searching.

One: If we offer no cup of cold water,

All: there is no gold, no frankincense, no myrrh.

One: If there is no praising God's name,

All: there are no angels singing.

One: If there is no spirit of alleluia,

All: there are no shepherds watching.

One: If there is no standing up, no speaking out, no risk,

All: there is no Herod, no flight into Egypt.

One: If there is no room in our inn,

All: then "Merry Christmas" mocks the Christ Child, and the Holy Family is just a holiday card, and God will loathe our feasts and festivals.

One: We affirm our faith in Jesus Christ, who lived and died and rose again, and is with us still.

All: Thanks be to God. Amen.

Prayer Jesus Teaches Us

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 and ever. Amen.

A Voice

Dietrich Bonhoeffer Address

My name is Dietrich - Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Many of you will know of me. Some may even remember me. What a life I have lived. Ahhh, those early years, growing up in the midst of things, in the center of culture, at the heart of learning, mixing with the greatest Christian minds. It was wonderful, breathtaking, and delightful. My career seemed assured - lecturer, pastor, teacher - in the old language, a prince of the confessing church!

How could I have ever known?

He was literally like a thief in the night, creeping up upon me, overtaking me, demanding of me the faith I had proclaimed in him. He changed everything. No longer an academic pursuit, this Jesus demanded of me a righteousness, a life lived out in faith and courage.

In the face of that worm Hitler and his henchmen, how could I be silent?

And in the face of my church's quietude, how could I turn my back?

Whether the plot to kill Hitler was right or wrong, you be the judge.

This is all I know... in Christ I found my life, and in that life I found the cause of justice, and in that cause I found true faith! Though it did cost me my life upon that scaffold, I would not change a thing.

Each of us must face the decisive moment - that moment when you know it is all or nothing. What does life amount to if it is but days lived out without a cause, without a meaning? Do I regret it all? Not a moment! To live is Christ, to die is gain!

***Hymn**

We Have Come at Christ's Own Bidding

Black #182

Presentation of Our Tithes & Offerings

Call to the Offering

Come now and kneel before the Christ child. Bring all that you are and all that you have. Offer your gifts in wonder and surprise and awe. Offer your gifts in joy and delight.

Offertory

The Shepherds at the Manger

Franz Liszt

***Doxology**

In The Bleak Midwinter

**What can I offer, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were wise one, I would do my part; but
What I can I offer: all my heart.**

***Prayer of Dedication** (in unison)

God of mystery and might, we praise and worship you, for you came in silence, while all lay sleeping, to enter our world as a child of humble birth. We thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, the Word, who became flesh to dwell among us. By your Spirit, make our hearts burn with thanksgiving, that we may give as we have received. Let our whole lives be gifts of praise to you. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

***Hymn**

Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow

(see insert)

***Blessing**

May the love of God fill our hearts.
May the grace of Christ keep us true.
May the peace of the Spirit make us strong
And may the Spirit of the Christ-child fill us with joy.
Now and forever. Amen.

Postlude

People, Look East

Traditional French Melody

Congregational Fellowship

The readings are from the worship resource, Services from Advent to Pentecost: Creative Worship by Ian Price and Carolyn Kitto.



Outreach and Service Opportunities

Service Workers are collecting twin Size Blankets for Holly House during the month of December. Contact Carol Mooers for more information.

Micah's Backpack is collecting Canned Soups during the month of January.

Our Tuesday Night Ministry is collecting Individual Oatmeal Packets during the month of January.

Thank you for your help in these outreach ministries.

Praying with One Another

Prayer is one of the most important spiritual disciplines of our faith, promoting communication with God, and love for God and neighbor. Join us in prayer as we pray for all those in our communities that we have touched or that have touched us and those that simply crossed our paths. Let us also remember to pray for peace and safety around the world and to pray with and for our Zion siblings:

Bruce Albright, Janis Albright, Holly Bell, Brenda Bowers, Naomi Brackett, Linda Cantilena, Richard Cantilena, Steve Cavey, Kim & Bill Cook, Donna France, **Brandon Graff, Sue Graff**, Michael Graff Jr. (son of Sue and Mike), Beth Gross, Elwood Hauver, Brian Johnson, Bradley, Hanna & Ellie Jump, Maddison & Rexton Jump, Tena Kindle, Dee Krause, Paul Loveless, **Marlin Martin**, Heather Morgan, Annie Penick, James Penick, Mary Pietsch, David Ridenour, Wells Ridenour, Betsy Roulette, Verna Rosenfield, Emma Schnebly, Ralph & Scherry Sellers, Felicity Shafer, Staci Shafer, Tina Shafer, Melanie & Wesley (granddaughter and great grandson of Danny Springer), The Springer Family grieving the loss of Danny Springer, Jessica Stark, Jovan Summers, Thelma Summers, Tracy Roach Walls.

*****New additions to the Prayer List will be printed in bold for the first week.***

Next Sunday's Worship & Calendar

The lector this week is Jean Simmons. The lector next week is Sue Graff.

Ushers for this week are Domenick Gerlando, Barb Hendershot, Matt McDonald, William Wantz.

Next week's ushers are William Brewer, Calvin Livingston, Gerald Saum, Jean Simmons.

Greeters for this week are: Front Door – Becky Hohman. Middle Door – TBD.

Please sign up to be a greeter on Sunday mornings. The sign-up sheet is on the table at the middle Add ushers and liturgist and greeters.

- 1/1 Office Closed
- 1/2 Staff Meeting 12:00 pm
Tuesday Evening Ministry 5:00-6:30 pm (Downstairs in Fellowship Hall)
- 1/3 Properties Team Meeting 4:00pm
Wednesday Potluck 6:00pm
- 1/4 Executive Team Meeting 2:00pm
4-H Club Meeting 4:30pm
Choir Practice 5:30pm
- 1/7 Take down Christmas Trees after worship
- 1/8 CE Team Meeting 5:30pm
Consistory Meeting 7:00pm
- 1/15 Annual Report Deadline

Other Announcements

Birthdays

1/3 Brian Johnson

Anniversaries

1/1 Kenlin & LoriBeth Martin

Do you or one you love need a Caregiver?

Danny and Julia Springer were well cared for in their home 24/7. Many of their six dedicated caregivers are available. Please contact Pastor Scott if you want to contact one of the caregivers.

Offering Envelopes

If you would like a box of Offering Envelopes for the upcoming year, please use the sign-up sheet on the table in the Chapel or let Rae Smith know. Office phone number 301-739-7244, e-mail zionrucc@myactv.net

Wednesday Night Potluck and Study (6PM in the Chapel)

Come on Wednesday nights to enjoy a potluck meal (bring what you like). Following the meal we will study the video resource, Painting the Stars.



Our Mission Statement

*To share the gospel of Christ in such a way that we find God, grow our faith,
discover our purpose and make a difference.*



Zion Reformed United Church of Christ

Welcome to the Zion Reformed United Church of Christ, an **Open and Affirming Church** striving to welcome and value all people and creation. I am glad you have joined us this morning. I believe you will find Zion Church an open and safe place to ask the difficult questions of life and a community that honors each spiritual journey. I encourage you to ask me or our members about our community, explore our bulletin and website and gift us with your contact information (phone, address, email) in our Guest Book or Pew Card. I/we are ready to answer any question or to help connect you to any program that we can. I hope to greet you in person after the service or that you'll contact me.

Many blessings, Pastor Scott

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