

# Celebrate Christmas



**at St. John United Church of Christ**

**December 24, 2021**

Christmas Eve

In-person with pre-service music beginning at 8:50p

Online at Facebook and YouTube

and

**December 26, 2021**

First Sunday after Christmas

No in-person service

Online at Facebook and YouTube

**Welcome!**

No matter who you are  
or where you are on life's journey  
you are welcome here.

## **Welcome to St. John Church!**

Masks are required and must always cover nose and mouth.  
Contact tracing information is requested to contain virus transmission.  
Please extend a respectful courtesy by silencing your cell phone.  
Sign Language interpretation is available in the front.  
Assistive listening devices are at the Welcome Table in the back.  
Offering plates are in the front and rear of the Church.

### **Pre-service Music and Lighting Candles** (8:50p)

Acolytes: Stefanie Dalsfoist, Bennett Draper, Grayson Draper, and Adeline Palm

Musicians:

Kaden Kass, viola; Craig West, guitar; Sarah Palm, clarinet;  
Theo Baldwin, piano; Mark Behnken, organ; Steve Milloy, piano & djembe

“Angels We Have Heard on High” -arr. *Steve Milloy*

“It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” -arr. *William Himes*

“Good Christians, All, Rejoice / God Rest Ye” -arr. *Bruce Greer*

### **Greeting** (9:00p)

Keith M. Haithcock, pastor & teacher

One: Merry Christmas!

**All: Merry Christmas to you also!**

One: This is an inclusive Church that extends love and extravagant welcome to all  
God’s children without judgment.

**All: No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey you are  
welcome here!**

One: Welcome to worship!

### **Centering Scripture**

John 1.1-5

Melissa Stephens

In the beginning there was the Word;

the Word was in God’s presence, and the Word was God.

The Word was present to God from the beginning.

Through the Word all things came into being,

and apart from the Word nothing came into being that has come into being.

In the Word was life,

and that life was humanity’s light –

a Light that shines in the darkness,

a Light that the darkness has never overtaken.

***Silence is kept.***

## Confession and Assurance of Grace

Keith M. Haithcock

One: God loves this world of flesh and blood, stone and tree, sheep and oxen,  
star and field. God loves the world so much that God comes to us in Jesus.  
Yet we are careless with God's creation. Let us confess our sin.

**All: How amazing is your love, O God!**

**You are not distant from us in some faraway heaven;  
you have come close to us in a child born of simple parents  
and cradled in a borrowed bed of straw.**

**We confess we abuse this created world.**

**When we stand by while the earth is despoiled  
and its destruction threatened,**

One: God, forgive.

**All: When we inflict physical or emotional pain on those with whom we share  
our lives.**

One: God, forgive.

**All: When we abuse or neglect our own bodies,**

One: God, forgive.

**All: By your great love, draw us into new ways of living.**

**Teach us to cherish and nurture life in this fragile world,**

**in the manner of Jesus, the Christ, whose birth we celebrate today. Amen**

***Silence is kept.***

One: Hear the good news: In compassion, God forgives us, enabling us to turn from  
the ways of violence and death; God shows us how to choose and cherish life.  
I say to you in the name of Jesus: Our sins are forgiven. Rejoice and sing!

## Christmas Hymn

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

Megan Osborn Williams, soloist

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,  
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest; *Refrain*

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning,  
O Jesus, to Thee be all glory given;  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing; *Refrain*

## Luke 2.1-14 (Rise in body or spirit.)

Melissa Stephens

One: 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.

**All: 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.**

One: 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.

**All: 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.**

One: 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."

**All: 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!"**

## Carol

Kaeden Kass, soloist

"Manglakat na Kita sa Belen" (Let Us Even Now Go to Bethlehem)

Let us even now go to Bethlehem, go to Bethlehem of Judea.

Jesus Christ, who is our sovereign,  
now in Bethlehem is born! Now in Bethlehem is born!

Let us even now offer love and praise to our God above, to our God above;  
Who from heaven's throne has sent a gift of love,  
Jesus Christ, God's only child, Jesus Christ, God's only child.

## Lighting Candles of Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy

Melissa Stephens

One: Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

-John 8.12b

One: The candle of Hope.

**All: Hope.**

One: The candle of Peace.

**All: Peace.**

One: The candle of Love.

**All: Love.**

One: The candle of Joy.

**All: Joy.**

One: Ever-loving God, as you lit up the sky that first Christmas, illuminate the world with your presence. We pray in Jesus' name, the Light of the world. **Amen.**

## Carol

Kaeden Kass, soloist

“Manglakat na Kita sa Belen” (Let Us Even Now Go to Bethlehem)

Let us even now sing with heart and soul:

“Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!”

Let us sing our praise that all the world may know,  
all the world may know God's love, all the world may know God's love.

## Lighting the Christ Candle

Melissa Stephens

The flame of the Christ Candle opens our eyes to God's everlasting light,  
showing us the way found in the Christ child born in us anew.

## Christmas Prayer

Keith M. Haithcock

## Ministry of Music

Kaeden Kass & Megan Osborn Williams, vocalists

“Emmanuel, God With Us” -*Nathan & Christy Nockles, Michael W. Smith, arr. Lloyd Larson*

## Luke 2.15-20 (Rise in body or spirit.)

Melissa Stephens

One: 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."

**All: 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.**

One: 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.

One: Here ends the reading inspired by God.

May God grant to us wisdom and courage for interpretation.

**All: Thanks be to God!** (Please be seated.)

## Christmas Homily

"TAKE HOLD OF CHRIST"  
Titus 2.11-14 -Common English Bible

Keith M. Haithcock

## Carol

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Kaeden Kass, soloist

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see you lie!  
Above your deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;  
Yet in your dark streets shineth the everlasting light,  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to 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!

## Call for the Offering - Matthew 2.1-2, 10-11

Melissa Stephens

"In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, [magi] 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 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."

We too offer our gifts. There are offering plates available at both the front and back of the Sanctuary. You may place your offering there as you leave. May God continue to bless you as you give generously.

## Unison Prayer of Dedication

**We join the Magi and present our gifts and offerings, O God, that they may be used to extend your liberating reign. With them, we offer our varied ministries in the days ahead that each of us may be part of your answer to the cries of the world. Amen.**

# Celebration of Holy Communion

ALL ARE WELCOME AT CHRIST'S TABLE!

## Invitation to Communion

Keith M. Haithcock

## Communion Prayer

One: God of light, in whom there is no shadow, your gifts to us are from the very beginning of time.

**All: They begin with creation, when your Spirit gave form to the chaos of energy and matter, and when your Word brought forth light on the face of the earth.**

One: They continued with our ancient ancestors, like Noah, whom you blessed with the colorful promise of the rainbow.

**All: And like Sarah and Abraham, whom you blessed with a child whose descendants, as many as the stars of the sky, were to be a light to the nations.**

One: In the desert, you gave the gifts of manna and of living water to the weary pilgrims whom you led by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

**All: At last, you sent your light into the world in the form of a tiny child, fragile and vulnerable, who grew to be the very Light of Light, full of grace and truth, revealing your glory on earth. We thank you, O God, that you have sent Jesus Christ to bring light and life for all people. As we receive this bread and wine, may we open our hearts to receive your love and grace through Jesus Christ, and receive the love and support of one another. Be born among us, that we may give Christ's love to the world, through the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

One: We recall how this sacrament began: Jesus Christ, born of Mary, on the night of his arrest, took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said to his disciples, "This is my body which is broken for you, do this in remembrance of me."

**All: Christ's life is our life.**

One: In the same way, Jesus took the cup after supper and said, "This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink of it, do this in remembrance of me."

**All: Christ's life is our life.**

One: Emmanuel, as we remember the holy night you came to us wrapped in swaddling clothes, we make room for you again in our hearts.

**All: We draw near with faith to receive this sacrament.**

One: Bless this bread, and bless this fruit of the vine. Bless all of us in our eating and drinking at this table that our eyes may be opened, and we may recognize the living Christ in our midst.

**All: Amen.**

## Sharing the Meal

### Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving

As a mother feeds her child with her body,  
so you, O Christ, feed us with yours,  
giving us the bread to eat and the cup to drink.  
May these gifts of grace nourish us deeply,  
that we may become your body in the world  
and live as instruments of your great love. Amen.

### Christmas Anthem & Candle Lighting

"Peace, Peace / Silent Night" -*Fred Bock*  
Megan Osborn Williams & Kaeden Kass, duet

(Masks remain on and all may sing together.)

**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.**

### Send Out (Rise in body or spirit.)

Keith M. Haithcock

One: Glory to God in the highest!

**All: Jesus is born!**

**God has come to us and shared our common lot, and so we rejoice!**

One: Go forth rejoicing in the love of God, the peace of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

**All: Amen!**

**(Please exit the Church house directly. Thank you and Merry Christmas!)**

### Parting Music

Mark Behnken, organ

"Joy to the World" -arr. *Mark Behnken*

## Welcome to St. John Church!

For more information about St. John Church go to: [www.StJohnChurch.net](http://www.StJohnChurch.net).

To receive *The e-Weekly* let us know at [Office@StJohnChurch.net](mailto:Office@StJohnChurch.net).

To contact the Pastor call: 859.261.2066, ext.202; email: [Pastor@StJohnChurch.net](mailto:Pastor@StJohnChurch.net).

## Contact Tracing Information

In an effort to keep everyone healthy, contact the Church office at 859.261.2066 ext. 201 or [Office@StJohnChurch.net](mailto:Office@StJohnChurch.net) if you are diagnosed with COVID after this service.

**Copyrights, Notes & Acknowledgments: All items are used with permission. All rights reserved. One License #A-712481**

**Greeting** by Keith M. Haithcock; **Centering Scripture** John 1.1-5 from *The Inclusive Bible*, copyright © 2007 by Priests for Equality; **Confession and Assurance of Grace, Unison Prayer of Dedication, Christmas Prayer** and **Send Out**, from *Book of Worship United Church of Christ*, ©1986, United Church of Christ Office for Church Life and Leadership (p. 480-482) adapted by Keith M. Haithcock; **Lighting Candles of Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy, and Lighting the Christ Candle** by Keith M. Haithcock; **Christmas Prayer** by Keith M. Haithcock; **Christmas Homily Scripture Titus 2.11-14** from Common English Bible (CEB) © 2011 by Common English Bible; **Holy Communion** by Carol Penner, adapted by Keith M. Haithcock; **Unless otherwise noted all Scriptures** from the *New Revised Standard Version of Holy Scripture*, © 1989 by The Division of Christian Education, National Council of Churches.