

Christmas Eve Communion Service
December 24, 2025 - 4:00 p.m.
United Church of Christ - Neillsville
Pastor Julie Ruegsegger

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GATHERING

Like the iconic figures gathered around the Christ Child in our nativity scenes, we gather together because we want to know Jesus more as we seek to bring his Reign of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love on earth.

RINGING OF THE CARILLON

WELCOME

LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLES

HYMN: *"What Child is This?" #148 NCH (verse 1)*

**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?**

Lighting the Christ Candle

HYMN: *"What Child is This?" #148 NCH (chorus)*

**This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!**

PRAYER OF INVOCATION (Unison)

Here, at the nativity of your birth, give us the courage to face this moment with humility and hope. Open us to new understandings of the unfolding story of your presence among us. Show us the true meaning of the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. We pray in the name of the Child, the One Who Reigns in our hearts and lives. Amen.

"BRING HIM LAUD" – OPENING HYMN/SONG

"Joy to the World" #132 NCH

**1 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.**

**2 Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**3 Christ rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of God's righteousness,
And wonders of God's love,
And wonders of God's love,
And wonders, wonders of God's love.**

SIGNS OF PEACE

**Leader: Peace be with you!
People: And also with you!**

PROCLAIMING

We open ourselves to the full story of Christ's birth, knowing that his story is the ground of our faith and the light for our path.

"HASTE, HASTE" – THE CHILDREN GATHER

**Be near us, Lord Jesus; we ask Thee to stay
close by us forever, and love us, we pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
and make earth a heaven, where all have a share.**

WE HEAR THE STORY

HYMN *"O Little Town of Bethlehem" #133 NCH vs. 1*
**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.**

Scripture: *Luke 2:1-3* **"Innkeeper"**
Scripture: *Luke 2:4-5* **"Joseph"**
Scripture: *Luke 2:6-7* **"Mary"**
Scripture: *Luke 2:8-12* **"Shepherd"**
Scripture: *Luke 2:13-18* **"Angel"**
Scripture: *Luke 2:19-20* **"The Wise Ones"**

HYMN *"O Little Town of Bethlehem" #133 NCH vs. 4*

4 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!

"ANTHEMS SWEET" – THE WORD IN MUSIC

Choir Anthem: "Mary, Did You Know?"

SERMON

"The Babe"

RESPONDING

Our faithful response is to praise God for this story of Emmanuel, God-With-Us, even and especially in the midst of difficulty, for God is indeed with us even still.

HYMN: "What Child is This?" #148 NCH

1 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!

2 Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Give heed, draw near; for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through,
The cross be borne for me, for you;
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

3 Bring gifts of incense, gold, and myrrh,
Come, join in jubilation;
The Holy Child, though meek and mild,
Has come with God's salvation.
Raise, raise the song on high,
The mother sings her lullaby;
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

PASTORAL PRAYER

PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

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

"SO BRING HIM..." (OFFERING)

Invitation to Generosity

Offertory

Doxology "In the Bleak Midwinter" #128 NCH vs. 4

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;
But what I can I offer: all my heart.

Prayer of Dedication

Jesus, in this scary world of darkness you are the light the world needs to see. Live in our hearts and minds. Help us to carry your light to the world by letting it shine through us in these gifts of time, talent and treasure. Amen

COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is good, Holy One, to give thanks to you, always and everywhere. You created us, you loved us into being, you delivered us, and you spoke to us through prophets. And then the time came for you to be with us, Emmanuel.

Congregation Sings:

Tune: "In the Bleak Midwinter"

Words: Amanda Udis-Kessler and Marcia McFee

**In a time of trouble, poverty, and pain,
Living was a struggle. Hoping was a strain.
Fear and desperation robbed the world of joy.
In a weary nation, Mary had a boy.**

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Congregation Sings:

**Holy, Holy, Holy, God of pow'r and might.
Raise we now, "Hosanna," to the highest height.
Heav'n and earth proclaim it, in all time and space.
Blest are we to meet you, in this holy place.**

Mary's boy became a man, compassionate and kind.
He invited all to follow the way of the kin-dom, the
commonwealth of God. Wherever he went, he tended
to those who suffered.

Congregation Sings:

**Teaching, feeding, healing, Jesus showed the way,
Sacred love revealing day by day by day,
Practicing resistance, cultivating care,
Centered in persistence, every act a prayer.**

His own suffering at the hands of the elite gave birth to
a movement of your Spirit, O God, that would forge a
new covenant of light. Jesus promised to be with us
always, in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit.

Breaking Bread And Pouring Wine

... And so, in remembrance of your mighty acts in Jesus
Christ, we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice,
in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim
the mystery of faith:

Congregation Sings:

**Christ came to uplift us, by his life we give.
Christ gave up his lifeblood, by his death we live.
Christ comes to us now, still, as we gather here.
Christ will come again, so, nothing shall we fear.**

... until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his
heavenly banquet. Amen.

Congregation Sings:

**So, my friends and neighbors, now it's up to us.
May we welcome strangers, building faith and trust.
May we live like Jesus in our time and place
'Til this weary people know amazing grace.**

Sharing The Elements

*All are welcome to partake in the Feast of our Lord.
The table is open to all.*

Prayer Of Thanksgiving

SENDING FORTH

*Just as our theme carol asks, "what child is this?" we,
too, have come with our questions this day. We go into
the world with answers of Good News, being the Body
of Christ through our words and deeds.*

CHOIR ANTHEM: *"The Gift of Love"*

WE ASK, WE ANSWER

As we prepare to go into the world,
let us ask and answer the question we came with.

What child IS this?

This is the one born into a time when
hope was hard.

What child IS this?

This is the one whose lowly status would send
a message of peace with justice.

What child IS this?

This is the one who promises us joy
even when life is difficult.

What child IS this?

This is the "King of Kings"
who shows us the way of true love for all people.

What child IS this?

This, this, is the babe whose Light
spreads through our lives to others and to the world.

PASSING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

John 1:1-5, 14

CLOSING HYMN

"Silent Night" #95 RED

**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;
"Christ, the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!"**

**3 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**

German: Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!

**Alles Schläft, einsam wacht
Nur das traute, hochheilige Paar
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!**

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE