

First Sunday After Christmas
December 28, 2025
United Church of Christ - Neillsville
Pastor Julie Ruegsegger

All music in this service copied and streamed under
OneLicense.net A-723900 and CCLI License # 20913817

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 AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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?

Light the Candles

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 the desire for justice. Open us to new understandings of the unfolding story of your presence among us. Show us the true gifts we must bring to our moment, as we seek a better kin-dom on this earth. We pray in the name of the Child, the One Who Reigns in our hearts and lives. Amen.

“BRING HIM LAUD” – OPENING HYMN/SONG

“The First Nowell”

#139 NCH (vs 1,2,4)

1 The first Nowell, 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.

Chorus:

Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell,
Born in a manger, Emmanuel.

2 They looked above 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. (Chorus)

4 This star shone bright in the northwest,
O'er Bethlehem it seemed to rest,
And there it did both stop and stay,
Right over the place where Jesus lay. (Chorus)

SIGNS OF THE KIN-DOM

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.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus' birth—which happened in Bethlehem of Judea, during the reign of Herod—astrologers from the East arrived in Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the newborn ruler of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay homage.” At this news

Herod became greatly disturbed, as did all of Jerusalem. Summoning all the chief priests and religious scholars of the people, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem of Judea," they informed him. "Here is what the prophet has written:

"And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
are by no means least among the leaders of
Judah,
since from you will come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel."

Herod called the astrologers aside and found out from them the exact time of the star's appearance. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, after having instructed them, "Go and get detailed information about the child. When you have found him, report back to me—so that I may go and offer homage, too."

After their audience with the ruler, they set out. The star which they had observed at its rising went ahead of them until it came to a standstill over the place where the child lay. They were overjoyed at seeing the star and, upon entering the house, found the child with Mary, his mother. They prostrated themselves and paid homage. Then they opened their coffers and presented the child with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they went back to their own country by another route.

After the astrologers had left, the angel of God suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph with the command, "Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you otherwise. Herod is searching for the child to destroy him." Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they left that night for Egypt. They stayed there until the death of Herod, to fulfill what God had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I have called my Own."

Herod became furious when he realized that the astrologers had outwitted him. He gave orders to kill all male children that were two years old and younger living in and around Bethlehem. The age of the children was based on the date Herod had learned from the astrologers. Then what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

"A voice was heard in Ramah
sobbing and lamenting loudly:
it was Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled,
for they were no more."

After Herod's death, the angel of God appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt with the command, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and set out for the land of Israel. Those who had designs on the life of the child are dead." Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they returned to the land of Israel. Joseph heard, however, that Archelaus had succeeded Herod as ruler of Judea, and Joseph was afraid to go back there. Instead, because of a warning received by Joseph in a dream, the family went to the region of Galilee. There they settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way, what was said through the prophets was fulfilled: "He will be called a Nazarene."

SERMON "Escape to Egypt"

Pastor Julie

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.

"WE KEEP WATCH" – PRAYERS IN WORD AND SONG

Centering Song: "Great Holy One"

by Brian Wren and Susan Heafield

Congregation:

**Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.**

Time of Silent Contemplation

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**

Congregation:

**Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.**

"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

Gracious God, in joyful gratitude for all that you have given us, we bring our tithes, offerings, and labor to help feed a world hungry for healing and hope; for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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.

CLOSING HYMN *"Go Tell It on the Mountain"*

#154 NCH

Chorus:

Go tell it on the mountain,
Over the hill and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born!

1 While shepherds kept their watching
O'er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens
There shone a holy light. [Chorus]

2 The shepherds feared and trembled
When lo! Above the earth
Rang out the angel chorus
That hailed our Savior's birth. [Chorus]

3 Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born,
And God sent us salvation
That blessed Christmas morn. [Chorus]

WE ASK, WE ANSWER

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

What child IS this?

This is the Truth, the Way, and the Life.

What child IS this?

This is the one whose love is the measure of true companionship.

What child IS this?

This, this is the "King of Kings"
whose grace is the measure of real leadership.

SHARING OUR BLESSINGS AND BURDENS

As we are gathered together as children of God, we are called to share our blessings and joys and our concerns, our deepest fears, sadnesses, griefs and needs so that we may bear one another up and support each other in prayer and Christian love.

BENEDICTION

SUNG RESPONSE: *"What Child is This?"* 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!**

POSTLUDE

Karen Mohr

RADIO BROADCAST

**11 AM Sunday radio broadcast
on WCCN 98.5FM and 1370AM**

**This week's radio broadcast
is given by Kathy & Howie Mathis
asking for prayers for all our friends
going through cancer.**

WELCOME

We welcome you to our service of worship!
We are glad that you have joined us on site,
through the internet or on the radio.
We pray that you will hear God's call,
seek to follow Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit.

YouTube line for Sunday, December 28, 2025
<https://youtube.com/live/xvWbgXwu9u8>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Sunday, December 28th

Deacon – JoAnn Wren
Greeters – Rosie & Jim Repinski
Ushers – Paul Vine, Kelley Burch
Power Point – Paul Vine

FYI - (for those who are scheduled for PowerPoint it is suggested that you arrive 30 minutes prior to the church service to get the laptop turned on, allow for any updates, get screen down and start running the announcements).

Following Sunday, January 4th

Deacon – Wayne Voss
Greeters – Lydia Schumacher, Karen Northup
Ushers – Craig Heck, Max Heck
Power Point – Janice Miller

Coffee fellowship after worship -

Sign up on back bulletin board

Dec 28 – Hamm & Weyer
Jan 4 – JoAnn & Wayne Voss
Jan 11-
Jan 18-

We need people to sign up



- Please have your January newsletter articles into the office by Monday, December 29th.
- **ALL committee annual reports are due into the office by Wed. Jan. 7th as our congregational annual meeting will be held earlier this year on Sunday, January 18th.**