

Third Sunday of Advent

December 14, 2025

United Church of Christ - Neillsville

Pastor Julie Ruegsegger



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PRELUDE "Danish Carol"
H. Alexander Matthews

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?" Heck Family
#148 NCH (verse 1) William C. Dix

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 Candle of Joy

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 an uncanny joy. Open us to new understandings of the unfolding story of your presence among us. Show us how to praise you even when songs and carols feel empty. We pray in the name of the Child, the One Who Uplifts our hearts and lives. Amen.

"BRING HIM LAUD" – OPENING HYMN/SONG

"Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn"

#107 NCH (vs 1,2,4) Marty Haugen

1 Awake! Awake and greet the new morn,
for angels herald its dawning.
sing out your joy, for Jesus is born,
behold! the Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor,
to bring all hearts together,
to open wide the heavenly door,
and lives now inside us forever.

2 To us, to all in sorrow and fear,
Emmanuel comes a-singing,
whose humble song is quiet and near,
yet fills the earth with its ringing.
Music to heal the broken soul
and hymns of loving kindness,
the thunder of the anthems roll
to shatter all hate and injustice.

4 Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night,
though cold the winter and cheerless,
the rising sun shall crown you with light,
be strong and loving and fearless;
Love be our song and love our prayer,
and love, our endless story,
may God fill every day we share,
and bring us at last into glory.

SIGNS OF JOY

Leader: Peace be with you!

People: And also with you!

Leader: I invite you to pass the peace with one another and to those worshiping online, and I invite children to come forward as we do so!

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

Barb Shoemaker

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

NEW TESTAMENT Luke 1:26-56 (Inclusive Bible)

Six months later, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman named Mary; she was engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. Upon arriving, the angel said to Mary, “Rejoice, highly favored one! God is with you! Blessed are you among women!” Mary was deeply troubled by these words and wondered what the angel’s greeting meant. The angel went on to say to her, “Don’t be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You’ll conceive and bear a son, and give him the name Jesus— ‘Deliverance.’ His dignity will be great, and he will be called the Only Begotten of God. God will give Jesus the judgment seat of David, his ancestor, to rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his reign will never end.”

Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have never been with a man?” The angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you—hence the offspring to be born will be called the Holy One of God. Know too that Elizabeth, your kinswoman, has conceived a child in her old age; she who was thought to be infertile is now in her sixth month. Nothing is impossible with God.” Mary said, “I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say.” With that, the angel left her.

Within a few days Mary set out and hurried to the hill country to a town of Judah, where she entered Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why am I so favored, that the mother of the Messiah should come to me? The moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who believed that what our God said to her would be accomplished!”

Mary said:

“My soul proclaims your greatness, O God,
and my spirit rejoices in you, my Savior.
For you have looked with favor
upon your lowly servant,
and from this day forward
all generations will call me blessed.
For you, the Almighty, have done great things for me,
and holy is your Name.
Your mercy reaches from age to age
for those who fear you.

You have shown strength with your arm;
you have scattered the proud in their conceit;
you have deposed the mighty from their thrones
and raised the lowly to high places.
You have filled the hungry with good things,
while you have sent the rich away empty.

You have come to the aid of Israel your servant,
mindful of your mercy—
the promise you made to our ancestors—
to Sarah and Abraham
and their descendants forever.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then returned home.

“ANTHEMS SWEET” – THE WORD IN MUSIC

“Canticle of the Turning” Words: Rory Cooney

Music: Irish Melody; arr. Rory Cooney

**1 My soul cries out with a joyful shout
that the God of my heart is great,
And my spirit sings of the wondrous things
That you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant’s plight,
And my weakness you did not spurn,
So from east to west shall my name be blest.
Could the world be about to turn?**

Refrain:

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,
And the world is about to turn.**

**2 Though I am small, my God, my all,
You work great things in me,
And your mercy will last
from the depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
Your very name puts the proud to shame,
And to those who would for you yearn,
You will show your might, put the strong to flight,
For the world is about to turn. [Refrain]**

**3 From the halls of power to the fortress tower,
Not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware
for your justice tears every tyrant from his throne.
The hungry poor shall weep no more,
For the food they can never earn;
There are tables spread, every mouth be fed,
For the world is about to turn. [Refrain]**

4 Though the nations rage from age to age,
We remember who holds us fast:
God's mercy must deliver us
From the conqueror's crushing grasp.
This saving word that our forebears heard
Is the promise which holds us bound,
Till the spear and rod can be crushed by God,
Who is turning the world around. [Refrain]

SERMON "Son of Mary" 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

Soloist: Corinne Armitage

Living one, how will you lead us?

**"Not by scheming or by stealth, not with glamor, power
and wealth,
but through Jesus, teacher, healer,
In a manger born, joy on Christmas morn."**

Congregation:

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

Prayers of the Day

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 "Infant Holy" Polish Carol

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 "All Earth is Waiting"

#121 NCH (vs. 1-3) Alberto Taule'

**1 All earth is waiting to see the Promised One,
And open furrows, the sowing of our God.
All the world, bound and struggling,
Seeks true liberty;
It cries out for justice and searches for the truth.**

**2 Thus says the prophet to those of Israel,
"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel":
One who name is "God with us," our Savior shall be,
Through whom hope will blossom
once more within our hearts.**

**3 Mountains and valleys will have to be made plain;
Open new highways, new highways for our God,
Who is now coming closer,
So come all and see, and open the doorways
As wide as wide can be.**

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 unbridled joy was
squelched by those in power.

What child IS this?

This is the one whose birth would stir the world from slumber and challenge us to know joy that comes from right relationships.

What child IS this?

This, this is the “Son of Mary” who shows us the song of life that is ours when we stand up for the least.

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

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

**This week’s radio broadcast
is given anonymously with the message of
“May HIS word be heard by ALL”.**

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.

Sunday, December 14, 2025

<https://youtube.com/live/xAe5sppuDEI>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Sunday, December 14th

- 9:30 AM Worship

Deacon – Karlene Wallace
Greeters – Nancy & Kirk Rodman
Ushers – Mickey Marty, Joel Raine
Power Point – Bonnie Weyer

After worship - 2025 Budget & Committee Election

Congregational Meeting immediately after worship
Neillsville UCC will review the proposed 2026 budget, as well as vote on committee members. All members & friends are welcome to attend.

Following Sunday, December 21st

Deacon – Janice Miller
Greeters – Byrl & Sharon Buddenhagen
Ushers – Ken Shoemaker, Russ Karl
Power Point – Barb Petkovsek

Mon. Dec. 15th – 9AM Card Making
Tues. Dec. 16th – 5:30 PM Trustees Meeting
Wed. Dec. 17th – 3:30 PM Confirmation
5-6 PM JAM Christmas Program Practice
6 PM Leadership Council Meeting

Coffee fellowship after worship -

Sign up on back bulletin board

Dec 14 – Mathis’
Dec 21 – Christmas Program
Dec 28 – Hamm’s & Weyer’s
Jan 4 –

We need people to sign up



Christmas Eve

Worship Schedule - Wednesday, December 24th

Candlelight & communion served at first service
4 PM - Family Christmas Eve Service
8 PM – “Old Fashioned Carols & Candles” Service