

Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21, 2025
United Church of Christ - Neillsville
Pastor Julie Ruegsegger



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PRELUDE "Infant Holy" with "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"

Anna Laura Page Karen Mohr

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(vs 3) Wm. C. Dix

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh,

Come, peasant, king to own Him.

The King of kings salvation brings;

Let loving hearts enthrone Him.

Reader 1: We light this candle of Love for those who need it most.

Reader 2: For all who feel they are on the outskirts of love.

Reader 1: For all who know the loss of a love.

Reader 2: For all who are rejected because of who they are.

Reader 1: Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this: "How will we make sacrificial love our aim in our time?"

Reader 2: What child IS this? This, this, is the babe who was swaddled in love and wraps us all in love forever.

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 a steadfast love that casts out fear. Open us to new understandings of the unfolding story of your presence among us. Show us how to be with and for one another in ways that add to the flourishing of all creation. We pray in the name of the Child, the Love Enthroned in our hearts and lives. Amen.

"BRING HIM LAUD" – OPENING HYMN/SONG

"O Come, All Ye Faithful" #89 RED (vs 1-2)

Tr. Frederick Oakeley

**1 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!

2 Sing, choirs of angels,

Sing in exultation,

Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!

"Glory to God, all glory in the highest!" [Refrain]

SIGNS OF LOVE

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.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

"Don't Be Afraid; the Light has Come"

written by Julie Bechtel

ACT 1 - Announcements to Mary and Joseph

Pastor Julie: Join us now in the retelling of the story of Jesus' birth. Notice, as we tell the story, how often the words "Do not be afraid" or "Light" are mentioned.

Sophie: Mary was alone at home. Suddenly, she was surprised when the angel Gabriel appeared. Mary was scared and shocked! Gabriel said to her, "Don't be afraid!" and gave her some exciting news. Mary listened carefully to the angel's words and kept the words in her heart. She was full of wonder but happy the Lord wanted to use her in this way.

Ben: The mother of Jesus Christ was Mary. This is how the birth of Jesus came about. Mary was engaged to marry Joseph. Before they were married, she was told by the angel Gabriel, "Don't be afraid!" and that she was going to have a baby by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sophie: Mary told Joseph what the angel had told her. He wondered and worried about it. Then an angel came to him in a dream.

Ben: The angel said, "Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The baby is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son. You will name him Jesus. Give him that name because it means he will save his people from their sins.

HYMN: *"Oh Little Town of Bethlehem"*

#133 NCH vs. 1-2

**1 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 shines forth the everlasting light,
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in you
tonight.**

**2 For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of
wondering love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing, and voices ring with peace to all on
earth.**

ACT 2 - Mary and Joseph Go to Bethlehem

Jocelyn: Augustus Caesar gave an order that all those under Roman rule must register. Everyone went to their hometowns to be registered. So, Joseph registered with Mary because she was engaged to marry him. While they

were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have the baby.

Sophie: Because of the registration, and the fact that Bethlehem was a small town, meant that all the empty rooms were taken, the last place Mary and Joseph went to find a room offered to let them stay in the stable where the animals were kept.

Jocelyn: So, Mary gave birth to her firstborn son. There were no rooms in the inn. She wrapped the baby in swaddling cloths and laid him in a Manger.

HYMN *"Away in a Manger"*

#124 NCH

**1 Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.**

**2 The cattle are lowing, the poor baby wakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord, Jesus; protect me, I pray,
and stay by my side until night turns to day.**

**3 Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
And fit us for heaven to live with you there.**

ACT 3 - Shepherds and Angels

Haddie: That night some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching over their sheep. An angel of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord was shining all around them. It all happened so suddenly, and the shepherds were very frightened.

HYMN: *"Angels We Have Heard on High"*

#125 NCH vs. 1-2

**1 Angels we have heard on high,
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply,
echo back their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

**2 Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be,
Which inspire your heavenly song.
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

Layne: Even though the shepherds were scared, they were also curious about what the angels had told them. They decided to go see this newborn King.

Haddie: Then the angels left the shepherds and went back to heaven. The shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem to see this thing that has happened!" So, the shepherds went quickly and found Mary and Joseph and saw the baby lying in a manger. They told them about what the angels had said about this child.

ACT 4 - The Wise Ones (Magi)

HYMN: "We Three Kings of Orient Are"
vs. 1-2 #233 W&R

1 We three kings of Orient are,
Bearing gifts we traverse a far,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.
O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.

2 Born a king of Bethlehem's plain,
Gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign.
O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.

Morgan: The next visitors to see Jesus were 3 Kings who were very interested in studying the heavens. They followed a bright star and came a long way to come and worship Jesus.

Sophie: After Jesus was born, some wise ones came from the east. They wondered "Where is the baby who was born to be King of the Jews? We saw his star in the east, and we came to worship him.

Jocelyn: The wise men saw the child, his mother Mary, and his father Joseph. They bowed down and worshipped him. Then they gave the family gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

Morgan: So, we as followers of Jesus, don't need to be afraid to show the light of his love to others in all our words and actions.

HYMN: "Go, Tell It on the Mountain"

#154 NCH

Refrain:

Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hill and ev'rywhere!
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. [Refrain]

2 The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo! above the earth
Rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's
birth. [Refrain]

3 Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was
born,
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas
morn. [Refrain]

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: Awesome one, how shall we meet you?
"In the wisdom of a child, in opponents reconciled?
When you meet with sudden kindness,
find my holy place in your neighbor's face."

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

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 *“The Babe of Bethlehem”*

Van Denman Thompson

Doxology *“In the Bleak Midwinter”*

#128 NCH vs. 4 Christina G. Rossetti

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

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 *“Joy to the World”*

#132 NCH Isaac Watts

1 Joy to the world; the Lord is come;
Let Earth its praises bring;
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.

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 surrounded by sacrificial love.

What child IS this?

This is the one who would go on to great sacrifice in the name of love.

What child IS this?

This, this is the one “Enthroned by Love” who invites us into more love than we thought was possible.

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 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.

YouTube line for Sunday, December 21, 2025

<https://youtube.com/live/7d94EbrH8ul>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Sunday, December 21st

- 9:30 AM Worship

Deacon – Janice Miller

Greeters – JoAnn & Wayne Voss

Ushers – confirmation students

Power Point – Barb Petkovsek

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, December 28th

Deacon – JoAnn Wren

Greeters – Rosie & Jim Repinski

Ushers – Paul Vine, Kelley Burch

Power Point – Paul Vine

Coffee fellowship after worship -

Sign up on back bulletin board

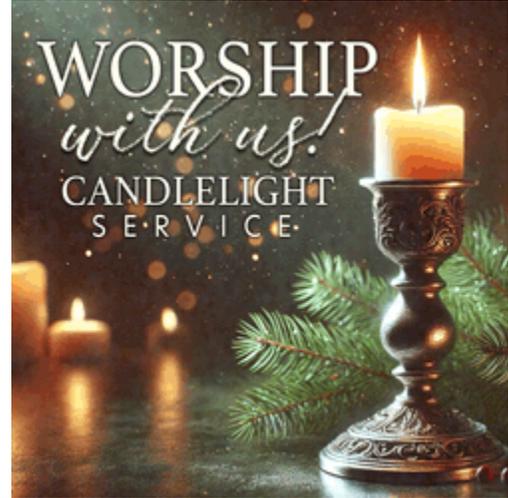
Dec 21 – Christmas Program

Dec 28 – Hamm's & Weyer's

Jan 4 –

Jan 11-

We need people to sign up



Christmas Eve

Worship Schedule –

Wednesday, December 24th

Candlelight & communion will be served at both services

4 PM - Family Christmas Eve Service

8 PM – “Old Fashioned Carols & Candles” Service

