**St. John United Church of Christ**

***“In Christ We Live, Celebrate, & Serve”***

December 27, 2020 First Sunday after Christmas

9:30 a.m. Worship (618) 877-6060

2901 Nameoki Road Granite City, IL 62040

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WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

HAND BELLS CALLING TO WORSHIP

A STORY FOR ALL GOD’S CHILDREN Galatians 4:4-7

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. (Galatians 4:4-5)

PRELUDE *Lift Up Your Heads* Lani Smith

CALL TO WORSHIP AND PRAYER

From *Brightest and Best of the Stars* by Reginald Heber

Brightest and best of the stars of the morning,

***Dawn on our darkness and come to our aid;***

Star of the east, the horizon adorning,

***Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid!***

What shall we give him, in costly devotion?

 ***Shall we bring incense and offerings divine,***

Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,

 ***Myrrh from the forest or gold from the mine?***

Brightest and best of the stars of the morning,

 ***Dawn on our darkness and come to our aid.***

Let us pray together.

***Whatever gifts we may bring, O God, cannot match the Gift you have given to us, the gift of your Son, our Savior. As we worship in this troubled time, may your Light overcome our darkest moments, and may your Hope grant us peace for all our days. Amen.***

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RESPONSIVE READING OF HOPE

 When Jesus was born, there were stars in the sky,

 ***And the stars still shine today.***

When the shepherds watched over their sheep, there were stars in the sky,

 ***And the stars still shine today.***

When the angel proclaimed good news of great joy for all the people, there were stars in the sky,

 ***And the stars still shine today.***

When the heavenly host proclaimed “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace”, there were stars in the sky,

 ***And the stars still shine today.***

When the shepherds knelt at the manger to see the child, there were stars in the sky,

 ***And the stars still shine today.***

When Mary pondered all that had come to pass, there were stars in the sky,

 ***And the stars still shine today.***

When we, like the shepherds, and Mary and Joseph, open our hearts to Hope born into a troubled world,

 ***The stars still shine today.***

 When we, like Simeon, open our eyes to Hope here, with us,

 ***The stars still shine today.***

 When we, like Anna, praise God for the Hope of salvation,

 ***The stars still shine today.***

HYMN ***“O Little Town of Bethlehem”*** Verses 1, 2 & 3

***O Little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!***

***Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by. Yet in they dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;***

***the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.***

***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 to God the King, and peace to all on earth.***

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***How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!***

***So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven. No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,***

***where meek souls will receive him still the dear Christ enters in.***

FIRST GOSPEL READING Luke 2:21-35

SOLO *The First Noel* David Paxton

SECOND GOSPEL READING Luke 2:36-42

REFLECTION *No Obvious Angels* by Shirley Erena Murray

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE, LORD’S PRAYER

 ***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.***

STEWARDSHIP INVITATION & BLESSING

 ***For centuries the devoted have worshiped you, O God, following traditions and rituals of the time. The offerings we give in our time continue this practice, so that your Light may still shine bright, and bring Hope to all the world. Bless our giving and our devotion, we pray, in Jesus’ Holy Name. Amen.***

HYMN ***“It Came upon the Midnight Clear”***

***It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:***

***“Peace on the earth, goodwill to all, from heaven’s all gracious King”:***

***the world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.***

***Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled,***

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***and still their heavenly music floats o’er all the weary world; above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hovering wing, and ever o’er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.***

***For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old, when, with the ever-circling years, shall come the time foretold,***

***when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,***

***and all the world give back the song which now the angels sing.***

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* Lani Smith

Max Lucado has written “Christmas is best pondered not with logic but with imagination.” Welcome to worship in the Star-Light of Christmas!

Special thanks to Chris McMillan who is our guest pianist today.

The bulletins are given in honor of the December 27th birthday of **Caslyn Grace Brandes** by Lorrine Brandes.

If you would like to place flowers in the background of Zoom worship, and pick them up Monday, please call Donna Streid at 877-7767.

In December we are collecting the **Veterans of the Cross-Christmas Fund** special offering, layette items for **Church Women United**, and Misison of the Month gifts for **Kindercottage**. Please clearly mark any financial donations so the counters can properly credit them.

In January we will have a new Mission of the Month—a “Pick-a-Mission” month—more information to come in January!

Next Sunday, January 3, we will begin the new year with an Epiphany worship service and the celebration of **Holy Communion**. Please have your home elements prepared.

The office will close at noon on Thursday, December 31. Please note that financial donations for 2020 recordkeeping should be given by January 1, 2021. Everyone’s support is **greatly appreciated** as we continue to faithfully be God’s church in action all year long.

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Pastor Karla will take some days off the week of December 28-January 3, so please call the office to see if anyone is there if you need to come in. For emergencies, call Pastor Karla at home.

On December 31 we say farewell to our front office secretary, **Katie Jones,** as she has decided to be at home to care for her special needs son. We appreciate her dedication and skills shared with us, which have helped us in many ways, but especially with technology and equipment. She will be on-call when we need some assistance in the future. After Council is re-organized, the Personnel and Pastoral

Relations Committee will begin seeking a new secretary. Until someone is chosen, volunteers and Pastor Karla will cover the front office duties. **Diane Gerdt** will continue as our Financial Secretary on Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:30-2:30.

**SAUSAGE DINNER 2020**

The profit from the 2020 Sausage Dinner was **$8,869.01**. That was only $2565 less than we made the year before, which included about $2700 of income from everything on the Youth Side. As usual, the profits will go to support the General Fund, Building Fund, Cemetery and OCWM.

Thank you St. John UCC for pulling together and making our largest fundraiser of the year such a big success. Give each other a much-deserved (virtual) pat-on-the-back. Special thanks goes out to our Chairpersons: Donna Brandes, Bob and Nancy Jacobs, and Dave and Karen Gaines.

**OUR PRAYERS**

**Nursing and Assisted Living**

Rose Marie Bauer, Loretta Cook, JoAnn King, Karen Luddeke, Shirley Thompson, Mary Lee Krohne, and Richard & Ruth Buer.

**At Home**

Ritch Alexander, Isabella Boyer, Marlene Brokaw, Myra Cook, Randy Fischer, Mary Franz, Norman Hente, Olen Hermes, Bill McAmish, Billie Meyer, Cliff Robertson, Valara Schorfheide, Merle Rose, June Stille, and Don Young.

Bonnie Fornaszewski, 200 Carlson Ave., Apt. 17D, Washington, IL 61571

**Illinois South Conference**

Pana United in Faith Church; Pinckneyville St. Paul UCC; Retired Pastor Rev. Jean Carmean

**SCRIPTURE READINGS--Luke 2:21-42**

**21**After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

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**22**When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord **23**(as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), **24**and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

**25**Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. **26**It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. **27**Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, **28**Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

**29**“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
    according to your word;
**30**for my eyes have seen your salvation,
**31**    which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
**32**a light for revelation to the Gentiles
    and for glory to your people Israel.”

**33**And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. **34**Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed **35**so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

**36**There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, **37**then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. **38**At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

**39**When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. **40**The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

**41**Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. **42**And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.