

December 19, 2021
Order of Worship
Grinnell United Church of Christ

As a safety precaution during COVID, please remain silent during the worship service (as in no congregant singing nor praying aloud). Thank you for helping to keep each other safe.

PRELUDE *The Journey to Bethlehem, Cesar Franck (1822-1890)*
Jesu, Joy of Our Desiring, J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

INVOCATION

Holy God of Joy,
We rejoice in the reality of who you are.
We live within the joy of your love for us.
Our contentment comes and goes.
Our happiness ebbs and flows.
Our feelings depend upon our circumstances,
our physical health, our brain chemistry.
But our joy is deeply rooted
in our identity as your beloved children.
And we give you thanks. Amen.

WELCOME and PASSING OF THE PEACE

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!
The Peace of Christ be with you.... *(silently)* And also with you.

SCRIPTURE *Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:39-56*

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

O God, we light the fourth candle of Advent.

We hear your angel Gabriel and witness the faith of Mary. Fill us with your grace and light.

Mary was a young, strong, spiritual woman. Even though her life was not easy, she heard God's voice and said yes. Her song was a prayer that would uplift those who were downtrodden. Her lyrics shattered the proud and called the world to change. She would bear within her the promised child, Jesus, the Light of the World. This Advent, we respond to God's beckoning to us as well.

Revealing God, visit us and fill us with your Spirit. Bring your good news to life within us. Give us courage to carry your light into the injustices and shadows of this world. Amen.

Shine on us, O God of justice; guide our path through gloom of night;
Bear within us Wisdom's glory; come to us, O Christ the Light.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

MC (Anderson Schirm): Good morning, friends and family, and welcome to our 2021 children's and youth Christmas service! We are delighted to be here, both in-person and online, with our church family.

This is an important story we'll be telling you today, made all the more special because today marks the first time that many of our church children have been here in almost two years. We all know that today's children's service is not the same as in the past. While there will be singing and music, it won't be the same as our church choir or children singing together. Nonetheless, we have enthusiastically pulled together our various talents and interests to create this service for you, so let's do our best to lift our voices and make a joyful noise this morning.

Before we get started, thank you. Thank you for your willingness to be creative, flexible, and supportive of our children and youth during this interesting season in the life of our world and church. May our efforts to celebrate the prince of peace, even as we modify our celebration, usher in a time of renewal and hope for the coming year.

Now, as our first joyful noise, Alex Chedester and Rosie Leasure will play "Jingle Bells" for you on their band instruments.

SPECIAL MUSIC: *Winter Medley* performed by Rosie Leasure (trombone); Alex Chedester (baritone)

MC (Isaac Sandquist): A joyful noise indeed! Let us pray.

Gracious God,

We give thanks for the technology that has kept us together as a church family over the past two years. We give thanks for science, for the vaccinations that have made it safer for us to come together today to celebrate the coming birth of your son, Jesus. As we participate from our socially distanced pews or from the comforts of our own homes, we remember all of those who are not able to be here. We pray for comfort and peace – reminding us all of your love and care for all creation. Open our hearts, God, as we hear from our children and youth this morning. May this return to one of our most beloved traditions be filled with grace and patience. May we be reminded that you are present in our midst no matter the medium or the time that has gone by. It is in your grace and by your love that we gather today. Amen.

MC (Alex Chedester): Ok, I have just received word that the donkeys have been fed and the lambs have finished nursing, so that means it is time to listen to Nora Laver as she helps set the scene with her favorite carol "The Holly and the Ivy."

SPECIAL MUSIC: *The Holly and the Ivy*, performed by Nora Laver and John Rommereim

MC (Alex Chedester): Now we will begin with the nativity story as told in the gospel writings of Luke and Matthew. Let us listen together as we hear from those who were there...

JOSEPH (Holden Smith): In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. I, Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because I was descended from the house and family of David. I went to be registered with Mary, to whom I was engaged and who was expecting a child.

ANGEL CHOIR: *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

MARY (Ryen McGee): While we were there, the time came for me, Mary, to deliver my child. I gave birth to my firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for us in the inn.

INNKEEPER (TBD): While Matthew and Luke don't really mention them, there were of course animals who shared the manger where Mary laid her baby. I should know – I'm the innkeeper, and when I had no room for them in the inn, I knew that my friendly beasts would help keep the baby warm in the stable.

SPECIAL MUSIC: *The Friendly Beasts*, performed by the Rodrigues Family

ANGEL (Gabe Schirm): In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. Then we, the angels of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

ANGEL (Clara Dillon): But I, said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Lord.

ANGEL (Greta Sandquist): This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.

SHEPHERD (Jacob Dillon): And suddenly there was before us a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!"

SPECIAL MUSIC: *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, performed by Clara Dillon and Greta Sandquist, accompanied by Kelly Sandquist

SHEPHERD (Jacob Dillon): When the angels had left us and gone into heaven, we shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So we went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When we saw this, we made known what had been told to us about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what we told them.

ANGEL CHOIR: *Away in the Manger*

MARY (Ryen McGee): But I, Mary, treasured all these words and pondered them in my heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them and as I had experienced.

MC (Anderson Schirm): It is time to hear from the Sandeno family, who will sing and speak for us about the Three Kings.

SPECIAL MUSIC: *Three Kings* performed by the Sandeno Family

WISEPERSON 1 (Clara Sandeno): In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, we wise people from the East came to Jerusalem, asking "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed the star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage."

WISEPERSON 2 (Cameron Sandeno): We set out; and there, ahead of us, went the star that we had seen at its rising until it stopped over the place where the child was. When we saw that the star had stopped, we were overwhelmed with joy.

WISEPERSON 3 (Ronan Sandeno): On entering the house, we saw the child with Mary his mother, and we knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening our treasure chests, we offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

MC (Isaac Sandquist): Well, there you have it. The most amazing story the world has ever heard. An untimely journey to Bethlehem. A new mother having to give birth away from home and without proper housing. And somehow, in the midst of all this... the hope of the world is born. I don't know about you but Christmas came just in time for me this year. The yearly reminder that love wins, hope reigns, and that the power to change the world resides in the innocence and compassion of our children.

MC (Rosie Leasure): Let us pray.

Lord, in this holy season of prayer and song and laughter, we praise you for the great wonders you have sent us: for shining star and angel's song, for infant's cry in lowly manger. We praise you for the Word made flesh in a little Child. We behold his glory and are bathed in its radiance. Be with us as we sing the ironies of Christmas, the incomprehensible comprehended, the poetry made hard fact, the helpless Babe who cracks the world asunder. We kneel before you shepherds, innkeepers, wise ones. Help us to rise bigger than we are.

Amen.

Thank you for joining us this morning. It was a pleasure to worship together with you. May the joy of Christmas warm your hearts.

ANGEL CHOIR: *Joy to the World*

BENEDICTION

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, let us give glory to God
Who gives us the strength to stand firm,
Who has shown us and all the world the mystery that was once hidden.
In the baby in the manger, the teacher, the healer,
the one who died on a cross and rose again, we meet God.
To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever! Amen.

See you on Christmas Eve!

POSTLUDE *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks*, Christopher Tye, 1592

Liturgists: George and JoAnn Britton

Angel Choir (a.k.a. Treble Vocal Ensemble): JoAnn Britton, Jo Entwisle, Russ Leggett, Jan Peak, Sue Ramsey, Liz Rodrigues, Judy Scheer, Mary Smith

Pageant Participants: Dillons, Chedesters, Hinsaleasures, Lavers, McGees, Sandenos, Sandquists, Schirms, Smiths

Organist / Accompanists: Kenneth Davis, John Rommereim, Kelly Sandquist

Pastor: Rev. Jessica Margrave Schirm

We give thanks to these helping hands who take turns throughout the month...

Mayflower Drivers: Rick Ramsey, George Britton, Denny Conway, Shane Estes

Chancel Flowers and Paraments: Sue Ramsey, Glenyce Conway, Karen Edwards, Sarah White, Oliva Wright