



Blessings for Christmas Eve from The United Church of Santa Fe



THE UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE
A United Church of Christ

A SERVICE OF THE WORD
with
CAROLS AND CANDLES

December 24, 2025
7:00 PM

For quiet reflection on entering the Sanctuary:

*I will light Candles this Christmas:
Candles of joy despite all sadness,
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,
Candles of courage for fears ever present,
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,
Candles of love to inspire all my living,
Candles that will burn all the year long.*

Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman
20th c. African American Theologian
Inspiration to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights movement.

WE GATHER

*As you enter the Sanctuary, please also enter in a time of silent reflection and prayer.
May the music lead you in the wonder and beauty of this night.
Also, please remember to turn off your cell phone or watch ringtone.
Thank you and blessings for this holy night.*

Gathering Music

Carol Medley

Choral Call

Processional: O Come, Emmanuel

arr. Joseph Martin

Welcome and Breathing in God's Gifts

WE LISTEN

The Call to Christmas

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Hear the promise of Isaiah:
"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them has light shined."

**Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; . . .
and the government shall be upon his shoulder.**

And his name shall be called

**Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God,
the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.
The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will do this.**

*The Musical Call to Worship

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Rev. Barbara Lundblad/Plainsong

***O come, O come, Emmanuel, And bless the place your people dwell.
Melt every weapon crafted for war. Bring peace upon the earth for ever more.
Rejoice, rejoice! Take heart and do not fear, God's chosen one, Emmanuel, draws near.***
***O come, dear child of Mary, come; God's Word made flesh within our earthly home;
Love stir within the womb of night, revenge and hatred put to flight.
Rejoice, rejoice! Take heart and do not fear, God's chosen one, Emmanuel, draws near.***

*The Promise of this Night

Nikos Kazantzakis, *Report to Greco*

If the scriptures had said: "Today light is born," our hearts would not have leapt. The idea would not have become a legend and would not have conquered the world. They would merely have described a normal physical phenomenon and would not have fired our imagination—I mean our soul. But the light which is born in the dead of winter was a child and the child was God, and for twenty hundred years our soul has suckled it.

*Carol

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O Little Town of Bethlehem
(All vs. 1-2, Choir only v. 3, All v. 4)

Phillip Brooks/St. Louis

WE PREPARE

The Lighting of the Advent Candles

Why is tonight different from all other nights?

Tonight is the Eve of Christ's birth when we light all the candles on the Advent Wreath.

Why do we light candles?

Their light symbolizes the coming of *la Luz de Dios* into our world. Each week as the world moved into deeper darkness, we lit another candle to proclaim *la Luz de Dios*.

What is the meaning of the candles?

The Advent candles represent the true gifts of Christmas—*paz, esperanza, alegría, y amor* – peace, hope, joy, and love. They helped us prepare our lives for the coming of Christ.

As we begin this holy night, we light these candles again and open our lives to receive God's gifts and our hearts to share those gifts with others.

We light this candle for the coming *de la paz*.

We light this candle for the coming *de la esperanza*.

We light this candle for the coming *de la alegría*.

We light this candle for the coming *del amor*.

A Prayer of Invocation

Stir up your power and come, O Lord.

Come into the shadows of our world.

Come with your gifts of peace and hope, joy and love.

Come with *la luz del mundo*, the Light of the world.

And come with your courage to share that light through our lives. Amen.

*Hymn

O Come, All Ye Faithful

Adeste Fideles

***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;
O come, let us adore him! O come, let us adore him!
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!***

***Adeste fideles, laeti triumphantes,
Venite, venite in Bethlehem:
Natum videte, Regem angelorum:
Venite, adoremus, venite, adoremus,
Venite, adoremus, Dominum.***

(Choir) *Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation!*

Sing all ye citizens of heaven above!

Glory to God, all glory in the highest!

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

*Child, for us sinners, poor and in the manger;
We would embrace thee, with love and awe;
Who would not love thee, loving us so dearly?
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!*

*The Lighting of the Christ Candle

Hear the Good News of John:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
In the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people.
The light shines in the shadows, and the shadows have not overcome it."

We light this candle for the coming of Christ, the light that shines in the shadows.

(The lighting of the Christ Candle.)

*A Carol

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Mendelssohn

*Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King:
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With th'angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"*

*Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us all from earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"*

WE ENGAGE THE ANCIENT STORY

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke (cong. bold)

Luke 2:1-20

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.

Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel 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 Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among all."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the 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 they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Choral Offering

Still, Still, Still

Norman Luboff

Reflection

O Holy Light

Silence

WE RESPOND

Offering Ourselves in a Prayer for Christmas and the Lord's Prayer

O God, the ruler of the ages eternal;
You are without beginning or end;

Yet you choose to be born an infant in time.

O God, the invisible,
You are the One whom no one has seen or can see:

Yet you assume the face of the son of Mary and Joseph.

O God, the all-powerful,
You hold the mountains in the palm of your hand:

Yet you let yourself be wrapped in swaddling clothes.

O God, the universal provider,
You feed every creature,

Yet you choose to hunger for the milk of your mother.

O God, the infinite,
Heaven and earth cannot contain you:

Yet you rest in the arms of Joseph.

O God, the perfect joy,
You are the source of happiness of heaven and earth:

Yet you cry like a little child.

Hear our prayers this day for all your children.

Hear too our prayers that we might hear their cries. *(silent prayer)*

We thank you, O Christ, for being born into this world.

We pray that you open our eyes and hearts to see you in our world.

We give thanks for Joseph's and Mary's love for you.

We pray that we might offer that same love to all your children.

We thank you for their courage and care.

We pray for that same courage that we, too, might care for others.

Hear our prayers for the earth and all its peoples.

Hear our prayers that we would carry the Spirit of Christmas into the new year ahead.

Hear our prayers to trust that you are truly Emmanuel, God-with-us and with this world. *(silent prayer)*

We pray all this in the name of the Child of Bethlehem,

the One whose coming we celebrate, who brings life and light to all the world

and who taught us to pray together, with boldness, courage and most of all, trust, saying:

(please prayer any version of the Lord's Prayer)

Offering our Gifts

Tonight's offering shares God's love for our neighbors in need in two ways. Half of your gifts go to **Santa Fe Habitat for Humanity** to support their building of houses for families throughout this community. (Santa Fe Habitat was started by the United Church of Santa Fe in 1987.) The other half of the offering goes to **The Christmas Fund of the United Church of Christ** for retired UCC ministers and their families who served inner city or rural churches and whose pensions haven't kept up with inflation and health care expenses. We invite you to be generous.

The Offertory

What Child Is This?

English Carol

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?

(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.

Why lies he in such mean estate, where ox and ass are feeding?

Good Christian, fear: for mortals here, the silent Word is pleading.

(Chorus)

So bring him incense, gold and myrrh; come, peasant, king, to own him.

The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone him.

(Chorus)

A Prayer of Dedication

Gracious God, on that first Christmas, you offered this world the gift of your love in human form, with a human heart and hands. Bless now these gifts and bless our lives with your transforming love, so that we might offer our hands and hearts in love for your children, our brothers and sisters, and to care for your creation. Amen.

WE SHARE GOD'S LIGHT

The Lighting of the Candles

A German Carol

Silent Night

Franz Gruber/Joseph Mohr

(Please stand after all the candles are lit. Raise your candle on the refrain of each verse.)

*Silent night, holy night,
All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.*

*¡Noche de paz, noche de amor!
Todo duerme en derredor.
Entre los astros que esparcen su luz,
Bella anunciando al niño Jesús,
Brilla la estrella de paz,
Brilla la estrella de paz.*

*Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing "Alleluia!"
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!*

*Benediction

*A Musical Benediction

Silent Night

Franz Gruber/Joseph Mohr

*Silent night, holy night,
Child of God, love's pure light,
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.*

A BLESSED CHRISTMAS FROM THE UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE!

We're glad you've joined us for this special night—and we hope you'll come again this weekend for the First Sunday of Christmastide (10:00 am Sanctuary Service) and into the new year. For additional information about our programs and ministries, please take a copy of the newsletter or go to our website (unitedchurchofsantafe.org). Again, welcome!

MANY PEOPLE MADE TONIGHT'S SERVICE POSSIBLE!

Including Rev. Talitha Arnold, Pastor; Michelle Schumann, Pianist and Director of Music; the Sanctuary Choir directed by André García-Nuthmann; Rebecca Brunette and Javier Ortiz, Soloists; Sacred Space Team (Donna Clark, Dana Hollifield, Dana Cagle, Christy Jones); Dana Bender, Family Minister; Donna Clark, Chris Palkowski, and Pam Hyde, Liturgists and Readers; Rev. Ben and Bev Larzelere Candlelighters; Dana Hollifield, Pam Hyde, Rosemary Thompson, and Karen Wilbanks, Greeters and Ushers; Media Coordinator Elijah Marquez aided by Frank Wilbanks; Office Administrator Lin Raymond; Christmas Ads designer Russ Rountree; the Farolito Crew, organized by Bob Ansheles; Children's Ministry Assistants Maria Navarette and Destiny Muñoz—and all of you!

Special Remembrances (2025)

The Advent and Christmas flowers, wreaths, trees, and greens in the Sanctuary and Community Room are given to the glory of God and in memory or honor of the following loved ones:

In Loving Memory Of:

Jean Abel
Rev. Homer and Mary Louise Akers
Elizabeth Standing Arnold and
Lee W. Arnold
Dr. and Mrs. A.A. Ashby
Dr. Charles and Jean Ashby
Sherman and Kathryn Ashby
Katharine Atterbury
Eva Bachicha
Marshall Bagley
Annie Balocating
Clifford S. Beck
Florence and Gardner Black
Nancy Blake
Rev. Betsy Bueschel
William Burnett
Kaye Burr
Rev. Robert Burt
Judith Call
Mary Lou Carson
Dr. and Mrs. W.A. Cassidy
The Cavatta Family
James E. Corbin
U. Lee and Nora Corbin
Charles Cranford Sr.
Charlie Cranford Jr.
John Benjamin Crews
Mort and Annikki Elkind
Dilys Evans
Moiria and Richard Flanagan
Dr. Viola Florez Tighe
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fricke
Rev. Paul Gaston
Rev. Mary and Rev. Shirley Greene
William Hanson
Patricia and Luther H. Hoopes
Helen Jackson
Rev. Kathleen Jimenez
A.E. and D.J. Johnson
Steve Kerchoff
Paul Knudsen

Maggi Konzen
Rev. Mary Kuhns
Denise Kuzel
Bob Langsenkamp
Judy Laughlin
Brett Lindsey
Bea Loennecke
Evelyn and Bill Lohmann
Mary Ann Lundy
Bernadette Martinez-Apodaca
Leon and Christela Mattingly
Phyllis Pruden McDonald
Evelyn J. Menzies
Monica Merchand
Suzanne Poling
Seth Pollack
Jean and Dave Popp
Flossie Shamblen Pruden
Olivia Rindone-Dotson
Rev. Bruce Rolstad
The Romero Family
Cleo C. Romo-Rogers
Dorothy Moellering Russell
Gladys and Ed Rutschman
Sarah Cady Sartorius
Gloria and William Sawtell
Tony Sawtell
Mr. and Mrs. W.A. Sawtell, Sr.
Stephen and Helen Sawtell
Jimmy Seitz
Marj and Bud Sewing
Rev. Dr. Reuben A. Sheares, II
Grace Dexter Skeen
John and Beatrice Skeen
Fred Smith
Glen Smith
Nicolas "Nico" Smith
John and Helen Snider
Jennifer Wilkison Stahl
Talitha B. and T. Wirt Standing
John B. Stewart

Royce Stewart
Tom and Vera Swantner
Rico Tapia
Cheryl Tongate
Phyllis Tribble
Edith and Edward Vogel
Helen Wagner
Barbara Wheeler
Ben Whitehill, M.D.
Bob Wilpolt
Kay Wilson
Don and Linda Zillman

In Grateful Honor and with Love for:

Rev. Joan Bates Forsberg
The People of Ukraine, Gaza, Israel,
Palestinian Territories and Sudan
Persons Caring for Loved Ones
Lin Raymond
United Church Staff

