



UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE A United Church of Christ

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025
10:00 A.M.

For reflection:

*We try directing the Christmas pageant,
But the script is calling for us to be onstage,
For us to listen, for us to go with haste,
For us to open the inn, for us to share the stable,
For us to glimpse the star.
All the parts have not been taken yet.*

Thomas John Carlisle

WELCOME TO THE UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE!

And welcome to the Fourth Sunday of Advent and the “Christmas Readers Theater!” *Kids United* and United Youth invite you to prepare your hearts, souls, and minds for Christmas – with singing, prayer, and the re-telling of the story of the first “living Nativity,” created by Francis and Clare of Assisi (“patron saints of Santa Fe”). It’s a story that’s as unpredictable and full of surprises as when it first happened. We invite you to relax, sing out your joy, hope, and praise, and let our young ones (and some bigger ones, too) lead you through this Fourth Sunday of Advent. We also invite you to turn off cell phones, beepers, and anything else that might keep you from experiencing God’s presence in this time of worship. Thank you. And thank you for being here!

WE GATHER

(May the first note of the Prelude be a call to prayer and stillness as we prepare for worship.)

Prelude

Christmas Medley

arr. Jason Lyle Black

*Congregational Introit

O Come, Immanuel

Plainsong/adapt. Barbara Lundblad

**Please rise in body or in spirit.*

*O come, O come, Immanuel, and bless each place your people dwell.
Melt ev’ry weapon crafted for war, bring peace upon the earth forever more.
Rejoice, rejoice! Take heart and do not fear, God’s chosen one, Immanuel, draws near.*

*O come, Desire of Nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Make envy, strife, and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven’s peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Take heart and do not fear, God’s chosen one, Immanuel, draws near.*

Welcome and Sharing of Life and Ministry

Breathing in God’s Gifts of Peace, Hope, Joy, and Love

*Sharing God's Gifts and Regathering in Song

(Please rise and offer to your neighbors around you "Blessings for this Blessed Season."
We regather with the conclusion this verse from "O Come Immanuel."

O come, Desire of Nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Make envy, strife, and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Take heart and do not fear, God's chosen one, Immanuel, draws near.

Breathing in God's Gifts Again

The Call to Advent from the Prophet Isaiah

Isaiah 7:14

The Lord will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a child and shall call his name Immanuel, God-with-us.

Musical Call

The Holly and the Ivy

English Carol/arr. Alan Beyel

WE BEGIN

The Call to Worship

Come, Shepherds, what do you seek?

Light in the darkness, love in the world.

Luz en las sombras, amor en el mundo.

Come, Kings, what do you see?

Luz en las sombras, amor en el mundo.

Come, everyone, what will you find?

Luz en las sombras, amor en el mundo.

Come, people, rejoice in *la Luz* and sing of el amor del Dios!

*Hymn

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Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

(Everyone v. 1; choir v. 2, everyone v. 3)

Marty Haugen/Rejoice, Rejoice

WE PREPARE

Lighting the Advent Candle of Love

Why is today different from all other days?

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent, and the day we light the fourth candle on the Advent Wreath.

Why is this candle different from the other candles?

It is the Candle of Love. When Christ was born in Bethlehem, it was a time of oppression and hatred among peoples of different races, religions, and nationalities—perhaps not unlike our time. Yet to the manger in that small town came people from all backgrounds—Hebrew shepherds and wise ones from the Far East, a poor peasant girl and a carpenter named Joseph—all called by God's love.

What does the fourth candle mean?

The candle reminds us that God's light and love came into our world in the flesh. "Unto us a child is born," proclaimed Isaiah, "Unto us a son is given." Through his birth and his life, Jesus Christ showed God's love so all people could see it.

Like the candles of peace, hope, and joy, the candle of love must brave great darkness.

Today when our world is troubled by fear and violence, we light a fire called love for all to see.

(The lighting of the Candle of Love.)

Stir up your power and come, O Lord.

Come to bring love to your people.

Come to bring love to our world.

Come to bring true love into our lives.

Stir up your power and come, O Lord.

Come to remove repression.

Come to conquer selfishness.

Come to change our world and our lives.

Stir up your power and come, O Lord.

Come so your word of love can become flesh in all life.

Come so your love might be born in our world.

Come so your love might be offered through our lives. Amen.

*Advent Carol

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Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn (v. 4)

Marty Haugen

WE CELEBRATE AND DEDICATE A NEW LIFE

Service of Dedication

Word of Introduction

The Promises of the Parents (Bina Surgeon in the Sanctuary—and Eric Fernando Amador virtually)

The Promises of the Family

*The Promises of the Congregation

You have heard the promises of these people. Will you who witness this dedication rejoice to take Camila Fernanda Amador Surgeon into your care (even long distance) and will you promise your love, support, and prayers for the one being dedicated and to her family as they live and grow in Christ?

With God's help, we will.

Will you also renew your commitment and blessing for all God's children as you seek to be a community of faith in which the Gospel of love and hope is offered to old and young alike?

With God's help, we will.

*The Naming and the Blessing

CAMILA FERNANDA AMADOR SURGEON

Camila Fernanda Amador Surgeon, child of God and child of Bina and Eric, may the eternal God bless you and watch over you. May Jesus Christ show you God's ways of life and love so you can love this world as God so loves. And may the blessing of the Holy Spirit sanctify you and empower to be the person of hope, courage, and power God calls each of us to be. Amen.

*Prayer for the New Child

*Song 118 *Of the Parent's Heart Begotten* (vs. 1-3) Divinum Mysterium/Plainsong

WE EXPERIENCE GOD'S WORD

Nativity Scenes, portraying Mary, Joseph, the Christ Child, shepherds, angels, kings, and the rest of the Christmas characters have been a part of Christmas for centuries. But that was not always so. In the Middle Ages, the story of Christ's birth—like the rest of the Bible—was often confined only to the Latin liturgy of the church. Francis and Clare of Assisi, two ordinary people who had extraordinary vision, wanted to make the story of Jesus Christ come alive for all people. Therefore, one Christmas Eve in a church, they welcomed all kinds of people from the village of Assisi (and the animals, too) to portray this most holy of stories. Today the children of the church (with help from a few adults), offer us that story of the "First Living Nativity," and invite us all to "Vamos todos a Belén!"

A FRANCIS AND CLARE CHRISTMAS

A Word of Introduction

Congregation

Vamos todos a Belén (Let's All Go to Bethlehem)

Mexican Carol

*Vamos todos a Belén, con amor y gozo,
Adoremos al Señor nuestro redentor. (2x)*

Congregation

When God Almighty

English Carol

*When God Almighty came to be one of us, masking the glory of the golden train.
Dozens of plain things kindled by accident and they will never be the same again.
Sing all you midwives, dance all the carpenters, sing all the publicans and shepherds, too.
God in all mercy, uses the commonplace, God on this birthday has a need of you!*

*Wise Ones they called them, earnest astrologers, watching for meaning in the moving stars,
Science or fancy, learned or laughable, theirs was a vision that was brought to pass.
Sing all you scholars, dance all the scientists, whether your theories are false or true,
God uses knowledge, God uses ignorance, God on this birthday has a need of YOU!*

Congregation	138	<i>The Friendly Beasts</i> (All v. 1; men v. 2; women v. 3; all v. 4)	French Carol
Congregation		<i>The First Noel</i>	English Carol
		<i>The first Noel, the angel did say, was certain poor shepherds in fields where they lay, In fields where they lay keeping their sheep on a cold winter's night that was so deep. Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.</i>	
		<i>They looked up and saw a star shining in the East beyond them far, And to the earth it gave great light and so it continued both day and night. Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.</i>	
Congregation		<i>Angels We Have Heard</i>	French Carol
		<i>Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plain, And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strain: Glo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-ria! In excelsis Deo! Glo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-ria! In excelsis Deo!</i>	
		<i>Shepherds why this jubilee? Why your joyous song prolong? What the gladsome tidings be, which inspire your heavenly song? Glo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-ria! In excelsis Deo! Glo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-ria! In excelsis Deo!</i>	
Piano Solo		<i>We Three Kings</i>	English Carol
Piano Solo		<i>Joseph Dearest, Joseph Mine</i>	German Carol
Congregation	165	<i>Love Came Down at Christmas</i>	Christina Rossetti/Whitney

WE RESPOND

Offering Ourselves in Prayer (adapted from the Greek Orthodox tradition)

What shall we offer thee, O Christ,
Who for our sakes has appeared on earth as human?
Every creature made by thee offers thee thanks.
The angels offer thee a hymn;
the heavens, a star; the magi, gifts;
The shepherds, their wonder;
the earth, its cave;
The wilderness, the manger;
Joseph and Mary, their love.
And we offer thee our lives,
**our hearts and our souls,
our spirits and our flesh.**

Creator of the stars of night, you continue to bring light and loveliness into all the Bethlehems of our world.
Hear now in the silence of our hearts our prayers for that light in our lives and the life of all creation.

(A time of silent prayer.)

As the Light of Christ was born in the darkened stable of Bethlehem,
may Christ's light be born in us and in this church.
As stars and angels joined with shepherds to sing your praise,
may we join with all creation to proclaim your joy.

All this we offer in the name of the One whose coming we await, the Child of Bethlehem, who taught us to pray to you with boldness, courage, and most of all trust, saying. . .

(Please pray a version of the Lord's Prayer familiar to you.)

Presenting Our Gifts

Offertory	<i>Lo, How a Rose/The Rose</i>	Michael Praetorius/Amanda McBroom arr. Craig Hella Johnson
Prayer of Dedication		

WE GO OUT IN PEACE

*Hymn	132	<i>Joy to the World!</i> (vs. 1-2)	Isaac Watts/Antioch
*Benediction			
*Musical Benediction	132	<i>Joy to the World!</i> (vs. 3)	Isaac Watts/Antioch

Soli Deo Gloria—To God Alone the Glory!

WELCOME TO THE UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE!

We're glad you've joined us for worship and hope you'll stay for fellowship time afterward. If you're visiting, we invite you to fill out the yellow "visitors card." Again, welcome!

Sharing leadership in this morning's service are the Rev. Talitha Arnold, Senior Pastor; Michelle Schumann, Pianist and Director of Music; the Sanctuary Choir directed by André García-Nuthmann; Kids United Choir, directed by Family Minister Dana Bender; Candlelighters Alicia Wolfe and Hazel Blankenship; and Liturgist Chris Zappe. You were greeted by Rosemary Thompson, Tom Stewart, Diane Darby, Pam Hyde, Karen Wilbanks, and Sunday Aide Irene Guilbeault.

"A Francis and Clare Christmas" was organized and directed by Dana Bender and Karen Wilbanks, based on a script written by Talitha Arnold. The cast includes Francis (Craig Hay), Clare (Karen Wilbanks), Mary (Maggie Bannerman), Joseph (Tina Hubley), Althea Pak, Rosalind Gafe, Hazel Blankenship (Animals and Townspeople), and Bob Ansheles, Sam Elkind, Frank Wilbanks (Kings)—with all of you as townspeople and singers!

LAST DAY FOR COMPASSIONATE CHRISTMAS GIFTS!

Do your last-minute Christmas shopping here at United's "Compassionate Christmas Gift Market. Give gifts that offer love and care to your loved ones – and to our neighbors in need around Santa Fe and around the world.

Coming Up this Week!

Christmas Piano Recital
United Pianist/Music Director Michelle Schumann
Tomorrow (Monday, Dec. 22) – 7:00 pm – United Church

United's Music Director, Michelle Schumann offers a Christmas Piano Recital this Monday at 7:00 pm at United, pianistic arrangements of Christmas carols and works by Bach, Chopin, Liszt, and more! Tickets (\$30/\$10 student) benefit *Hearts in Harmony* program of the Santa Fe Desert Chorale.

Las Posadas at United – Tuesday, Dec. 23 at 6:00 pm

We welcome the community of Santa Maria de la Paz for a wonderful New Mexico tradition: an early evening of song, prayer, and a visit from a couple of newlyweds. For the night, United becomes the stable of Bethlehem to welcome them (and provide hospitality and refreshments). Plan to come—all ages welcome!

Christmas Eve Is This Wednesday!

- **3:00 pm: Farolito Set-up:** Join us Tuesday afternoon to place dozens of farolitos all around the church. Many hands make light work! Please bring long grill lighters.

Light One Candle

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

- **Candles & Carols Service (5:00 pm):** Designed for families with children, but all welcome! Carols, a Christmas story, and the Candle-lighting Service. (Infant and toddler childcare.)
- **Candlelight Service (7:00 pm):** Carols, candle-lighting, the Sanctuary Choir, soloists, and a message of hope. (Childcare.)

First Sunday of Christmastide (Next Sunday, Dec. 28) (one service only at 10:00 am)

The Church Office will be closed from Wednesday, Dec. 24 through Friday, Dec. 26. For pastoral emergencies, please call 505-988-3295 and your call will be returned. Thank you.

COMING UP IN THE NEW YEAR!

FebFest 2026! Festival of African American Sacred Music

Saturday, January 31 – Choral Workshop at United Church (9:00 to 4:00)
Sunday, February 1 — 3:00 pm Concert at St. Francis Cathedral



United's Festival Choir and *Coro Lux* present the 8th annual **FebFest 2026** with special guest, Dr. G. Phillip Schoultz, Saturday, Jan. 31—Sunday, Feb. 1. All singers (of all musical abilities) are invited to join the all-day workshop at United on Saturday, Jan. 31 with Dr. Schoultz and then sing in the Sunday (Feb. 1) afternoon concert at St. Francis Cathedral. United's Music Director Michelle Schumann is the Pianist for both the workshop and the concert.

Dr. Schoultz will also be our guest in the 10:00 worship service that Sunday morning, conducting United's Choir and also sharing a triologue sermon with Talitha Arnold and Bradley Ellingboe.

Also, the free Sunday afternoon concert at St. Francis Cathedral includes a freewill offering to support the new Santa Fe Faith Coalition for Immigration and the Albuquerque Roadrunner Food Bank.

Register for the Choral Workshop at [FebFest 2026 – Coro Lux](#). And help spread the word! (You'll also get a "sneak-peek" as United's choir sings some of Dr. Schoultz' works in 10:00 Epiphany worship.)

THANK YOU FOR 'BEING the ENERGY!'

- To date in the Campaign for United 2026, we've received 147 pledges, totaling over \$575,000. We'll reach the Challenge Goal of \$635,000 with your help. Your pledge counts!
- **If you haven't had a chance to pledge yet, we invite you to join in.** Pledge cards and envelopes are in the Community Room.
- Please continue to hold United Church and the Campaign leaders **in prayer** as we move ahead. Most of all, take time each day to **remember** all the ways God has blessed your life and be open to the ways you can share those blessings with others.

Year-End Giving

To claim a charitable deduction for 2025, checks, gifts, or online donations must be received or postmarked by Dec. 31, 2025. Checks received after Dec. 31 can't qualify for a charitable deduction for 2025, even if dated 2025. (Sorry!) You can also visit [unitedchurchofsantafe.org](#) and click on the "donate now" button to contribute online. Many thanks!

Consider Electronic Contributions for Your 2026 Pledge

It's simple to set up your pledge as an electronic contribution from your credit card, checking account, or savings account. Call the church (505-988-3295) for an authorization form.

United Church of Christ Christmas Fund

Because many United Church of Christ retirees faithfully served low-income inner-city or rural congregations and/or communities of color, their pensions are very low. The UCC Christmas Fund provides emergency grants, supplemental annuities, health insurance, and Christmas "Thank You" checks for clergy and lay worker retirees in need. With inflation, that need is greater than ever. To donate, go to [unitedchurchofsantafe.org](#) (Donate Now) or send a check to United Church of Santa Fe (memo "Christmas Fund").