



# 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, 2024**  
**7:00 PM**

### *For Reflection*

So what is this good news of Jesus Christ? Well, it depends on who you ask. For the apostle John, the gospel is the good news that in Jesus, God “became flesh and dwelt among us” or more literally, God “became flesh and tabernacled—pitched a tent—among us.” God took up residence among the people by becoming one of us.

For the woman at the well, the good news is she doesn’t have to find the right temple after all, for God has started a new family of faith, beginning with despised Samaritans and the kind of women who do not belong at wells. For Matthew and Mark, the good news is that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah sent to establish God’s reign on earth, not through conquest, power, and revenge, but through faithfulness, sacrifice, and unconditional love. The kingdom of heaven is not some far-off, future dream; it is here, among us, made real by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus is what it looks like when God is Sovereign, when God’s will is done “on earth as it is in heaven.”

Rachel Held Evans, *Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again*

### **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

*Carols of the Season*

\*Introit

***O Come, Dear Child of Mary***

Barbara Lundblad/Plainsong

*(\*Please rise in body or spirit.)*

***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, 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 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

*Ding, Dong, Merrily on High*

16<sup>th</sup> c. French carol/arr. Charles Wood

### 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.

### A Welsh Carol of Promise

*Now the Heavens Start to Whisper*

Mary Louise Bringle/Suo Gân



1. Now the heav - ens start to whis - per As the veil is grow - ing thin.  
2. Heav - y clouds that block the moon - light Now be - gin to drift a - way.  
3. Christ, e - ter - nal sun of jus - tice, Christ, the rose of wis - dom's seed,



Earth from slum - ber wakes to lis - ten To the stir - ring, faint with - in:  
Dia - mond bril - liance through the dark - ness Shines the hope of com - ing day.  
Come to bless with fire and fra - grance Hours of yearn - ing hurts, and need.



Seed of prom - ise, deep - ly plant - ed, Child to spring from Jes - se's stem!  
Christ, the morn - ing star of splen - dor, Gleams with - in a world grown dim.  
In the lone - ly, in the stran - ger, In the out - cast hid from view:



Like the soil be - neath the frost - line, Hearts grow soft to wel - come him.  
Heav - en's em - ber fans to full - ness; Hearts grow warm to wel - come him.  
Child who comes to grace the man - ger, Teach our hearts to wel - come you.

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## 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!*

*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!*

(Choir) *Adeste fideles, laeti triumphantes,*

*Venite, venite in Bethlehem:*

*Natum videte, Regem angelorum:*

*Venite, adoremus, venite, adoremus,*

*Venite, adoremus, Dominum.*

*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.

Carol

*What Child Is This?*

Greensleeves

*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)*

Reflection

*Whose Birthday Is It Anyway?*

Silence

Musical Reflection

*Candlelight Carol*

John Rutter

Offering Ourselves in Prayer (based on a prayer by Frederick Buechner)

*(We close with the Lord's Prayer. Please pray any version.)*

The Offertory

*A la ru*

Hispanic Folk Melody

Tonight's offering shares God's love through **The Christmas Fund of the United Church of Christ** for retired UCC pastors and lay workers in need and with the purchase of **supplies for Ukrainian, Palestinian, Syrian, and Sudanese families** in refugee camps in their homeland and other countries. We invite you to be generous.

\*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.*

Postlude

*O Come All Ye Faithful*

Adeste Fideles/arr. Robert D. Vandall

*(You're invited to stay through the postlude or to leave quietly.  
In the spirit of the night, please let silence follow the postlude.)*

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### ***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.

#### **MANY PEOPLE MADE TONIGHT'S SERVICE POSSIBLE!**

Including Rev. Talitha Arnold, Pastor; Bradley Ellingboe, Director of Music; Dr. Jacquelyn Helin, Pianist; Sanctuary Choir (Rebecca Brunette, soloist); Sacred Space Team (Nyla Rasmussen, Donna Clark, Dana Hollifield, Cindy Knox, Christy Jones); Sam Elkind and Phil Kruger, Molly and Sam Elkind, Liturgists and Readers; the Surgeon-Amador Family (Blanca, Bina, Fernando) Candlelighters; Greeters and Ushers (Tom and Sally Stewart, Blanca Surgeon, Bina Surgeon, Louise Cavatta, Karen Wilbanks, and Dana Hollifield); Aide Luis Zapata; Media Coordinator Elijah Marquez; Christmas Ads: Russ Rountree; the Farolito Crew – and all of you!

In addition, Children's Ministry Assistants Maria Navarette and Destiny Muñoz are providing loving childcare in the Nurture Center.

For additional information about our programs and ministries, please take a copy of the newsletter or go to our website ([unitedchurchofsantafe.org](http://unitedchurchofsantafe.org)). Again, welcome!

#### **TONIGHT'S OFFERING CARES FOR THOSE IN NEED**

Tonight's offering will be divided two ways. Half will go to Church World Service for blankets and other supplies for Ukrainian, Gazan, and Sudanese refugees. The other half goes to *The Christmas Fund* of the national United Church of Christ that provides emergency funds for retired clergy and lay workers whose pensions don't provide for basic necessities of food and shelter.

On the night we remember a refugee family seeking shelter and hope, may we also remember and support such families in our time and also care for retired church workers who cared for others throughout their ministries. Thank you for your generosity. (You can also donate online at [unitedchurchofsantafe.org](http://unitedchurchofsantafe.org).)

## Special Remembrances (2024)

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:

Rev. Homer and Mary Louise Akers  
The Parents of Gail and Bob Ansheles  
Elizabeth Standring Arnold and  
Lee W. Arnold  
Dr. and Mrs. A.A. Ashby  
Dr. Charles and Jean Ashby  
Sherman and Kathryn Ashby  
Janice Ballard  
Annie Balocating  
Cliff Beck  
Florence and Gardner Black  
Kaky Black  
Nancy Blake  
Jane Bliss  
John Bray-Morris  
Rev. Betsy Bueschel  
Kay Burdette  
William Burnett  
Rev. Robert Burt  
Jack Callaghan  
Dr. and Mrs. W.A. Cassidy  
Jerry Cavatta  
Wayne and Jeanne Cebell  
James E. Corbin  
U. Lee and Nora Corbin  
John Benjamin Crews  
Debbie Crump  
Rev. Dr. David Daniels  
Olivia Angeliqe Rindone Dodson  
Jean, Vern, and Dove Duncan  
Yvonne Fairchild  
Moirra and Richard Flanagan  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fricke  
Friends and Colleagues of the  
Rasmussens  
John Garman and Levone Kail  
Rev. Paul Gaston  
Rev. Mary and Rev. Shirley Greene  
Conferina Gregory  
Susan Greig  
Ruben and Tyra Helin  
Rudolph and Janet Helin  
Richard Herbst  
Patricia and Luther H. Hoopes  
Clifford Jackson

Alda Jansen  
Sven Olaf Johnson  
Dorothy and Plato Karayanis  
Maggi Konzen  
Rev. Mary Kuhns  
Bob Langsenkamp  
Bob and Josie Lanz  
Brett Lindsey  
Bea Loennecke  
Evelyn and Bill Lohmann  
Bernadette Martinez-Apodaca  
Leon and Christela Mattingly  
Phyllis McDonald  
Monica Merchand  
Louise Reid Miller  
Jean and John Mills  
Carla Muth  
Journalist Gustav Niebuhr  
Mary Noonan  
Norman, Dorothy, and Jim Patinka  
Jean and Dave Popp  
Flossie Shamblen Pruden  
John A. Raymond, Sr.  
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Gloria and William Sawtell  
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Stephen and Helen Sawtell  
Clare Standring Schoenfelder  
Jimmy Seitz  
Marj and Bud Sewing  
Rev. Dr. Reuben A. Sheares, II  
Beatrice Pruden Skeen  
John and Helen Snider  
Talitha B. and T. Wirt Standring  
John B. Stewart  
Roy Swackhamer  
Thomas and Vera Swantner  
Bill Templeman  
Harry and Jere Turner  
Viola Varble  
Edith and Edward Vogel  
Rev. Elmer and Florence Wallin  
Ben Whitehill, M.D.  
Phil Wolfe

Dean Woodward  
Harold and Elizabeth Anne  
Wooldridge  
Marie Young  
To honor the memory of those killed  
in Ukraine, Gaza, Israel, and Sudan

### In Grateful Honor and with Love for:

Rev. Delois Brown-Daniels  
Rev. Joan Bates Forsberg  
Joyce Pohl, Accountant  
The People of Ukraine, Israel,  
Palestinian Territories and Sudan  
United Church Staff: Talitha, Brad,  
Elijah, Lin, Maria, Destiny, Steve,  
Yasmeen, Becky, Quiara  
Helen Wagner

