

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONGREGATIONAL**  
**Wallace, Idaho**

Alice M.C. Ling, Pastor

First Sunday after Christmas

December 27, 2020

SONG    *“The First Noel”*

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Good morning, my friends. And welcome again to worship. After weeks of preparation, we made it to Christmas and through to the other side. While some would say that the celebration is over and done, the Church is more inclined to say that today is the third of a 12-day season. The Wise Men have just headed out and are following the star, not sure where it's leading them, and who or what they will find on the other end. In one way or another, all of us are left to wonder what we do with Jesus now. Hopefully not put him away with the decorations, but instead nurture and encourage him, learn to love the person he is, the wisdom he holds, the God he reveals. The journey with Jesus has just begun, and so we move forward in anticipation and hope.

Today, we will be participating in a worship service that has been prepared for us by the Board of Directors of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ. These days, as many of our churches are doing our own form of online worship, it's very difficult to know how to take vacation time; and so I'm deeply grateful for occasional services like this one that lighten the load, while offering all of us fresh faces and new voices. I'll return later in the worship to offer prayers, and for now, share with you the gift that has been prepared for us. Welcome to worship.

PRELUDE    *“Angels We Have Heard on High”*    arr. Hal Hopson

**CALL TO WORSHIP AND PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

**SCRIPTURE READING**    Luke 2:22-40

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 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

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. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 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, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

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

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. 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 so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

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, 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. 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.

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

ANTHEM “*Joyful, Joyful*”

arr. Mervyn Warren, adapted by Roger Emerson

SERMON

Rev. Ron Patterson

### PRAYER REQUESTS

For a new mom to be, Randi who is 34 years old and has yearned for a child, only to have many miscarriages for many years...she is now 16 weeks along..the furthest ever in a pregnancy....prayers that God will protect and grow this baby to full term....as we celebrated Jesus's birth on Friday...may this baby have its own special birthday in due time. Comfort all women who have struggled through miscarriage losses.

### PASTORAL PRAYER

Holy God, as the festivities and celebrations wind down, we bring before you hearts that are full to overflowing with all that the recent days and weeks have held. For some there has been deep joy in time spent with loved ones; for others gratitude for significant connections over the phone or with Zoom, in cards received and gifts exchanged; for yet others the haunting hollowness of empty chairs and silent rooms. We bring all of that before you, as we move further into the letdown and leftovers of Christmas. We do give thanks for all of the ways that we have felt and been blessed by the gift of love, most especially your love for us in the birth of Jesus, your entrance into our world and your promise to walk with us along every step of every day. As we find places to put the gifts we have received, remind us of the places you seek in our hearts and lives, the ways in which we can welcome you and make a home for you, that your love might be at home and grow within and among us.

Holy God, we pray for all those who are sick, for the grieving, for caregivers who grow weary, for the hungry and the homeless, for the unemployed and under employed who simply cannot make ends meet. We pray especially for all those battling COVID, for hospitals that are full to overflowing and medical personnel that are running on empty. We also give thanks for those hard at work distributing and delivering the vaccines to every corner as fast as they can. We pray this morning for Randi, and all those who yearn to be parents; bless their efforts and their longing, and encourage the new life that is available to them. We pray for the people of Memphis and the investigators trying to make sense of one more act of violence. We pray for those who travel in the midst of winter storms and a raging pandemic; keep them safe and bring them home. We pray continually for national and world leaders, for wisdom and integrity, for humility and strength, for compassion and courage. Lead us all along the paths that make for peace, and open our eyes and our hearts to the image of your face in all of the faces we see.

Hear our prayers, O God, spoken and unspoken. And hear us as we join in the prayer that Jesus taught, saying: Our Father...

PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR (debts)

OFFERING

As we approach the end of 2020, I want to remind you of the United Church of Christ Christmas Fund, which we have talked about the last couple of times we've been together. It's a fund that supplements the inadequate pensions of retired clergy, as well as responds in times of emergency for clergy and their families, as well as long-term lay employees. The needs the fund has addressed in the past nine months are about 300 percent larger than the needs in the same period the year before, largely because of the impact of the COVID pandemic. It's a valuable source of support and assistance, as well as a tangible expression of the message that those who struggle are not alone, but part of a community of faith that accompanies and cares for them. Any gift that you choose to make will be gratefully received; just leave it at the church designated for the UCC Christmas Fund.

I also want to remind you that the Treasurer will be closing the books on 2020 on December 31. If there are gifts you want to make to the church this year, they should be dated 12/31/20 and received at the church within the first week of January. I pray you know what a difference you make with the gifts you offer. You build up the Body of Christ through our ministry together in Wallace, as well as beyond in the United Church of Christ. You make tangible the love and care of God. You strengthen and bless our life together and our witness in this community. Thank you for everything you do and everything you are.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE