

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONGREGATIONAL
Wallace, Idaho

Alice M.C. Ling, Pastor



December 26, 2021

First Sunday after Christmas

PRELUDE “*Joy to the World*”

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP (Isaiah 52:7, 9)

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of one who brings good tidings.

We receive good tidings of joy, words of peace, a message of salvation.

Break forth into singing, for God has comforted the people, brought blooms to the wasteland, shown strength in all the nations.

Word of the infant born in Bethlehem is our good news.

Christ is born. The prophet’s hopes are made flesh, and all our longings are made human in joy.

Rejoice and be glad, for Christ is born today!

(Maren Tirabassi, *Touch Holiness*)

HYMN No. 131 “*Angels, from the Realms of Glory*”

Angels, from the realms of glory, Wing your flight o’er all the earth;

Ye who sang creation’s story, Now proclaim Messiah’s birth:

Come and worship, come and worship, Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Shepherds, in the fields abiding, Watching o’er your flocks by night,

God with us is now residing, Yonder shines the infant Light: ...

Sages, leave your contemplations, Brighter visions beam afar;

See the great Desire of nations, Ye have seen His natal star: ...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION (in unison)

Giver of gifts, amid the tall tinsel trees your light breaks through to the world. We hear that you have come to us in love and in flesh. Speak to us anew of that eternal love which reaches out to us in the birth of Jesus. Amen. (Christian A. Tirre, *Touch Holiness*)

SCRIPTURE READING Luke 2:8-14

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 the Messiah, 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 heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

READING *Gloria, the Christmas Angel* by Scott Anthony Asalone, illustrated by Mary Jo Scandlin

READING "Shepherd" Lisa Debney (*Hay and Stardust*, Wild Goose Publications)

Until tonight

I could not fit the size of God
into my head.

I thought he was a God
for prophets and kings,
men of words and wisdom.

But tonight I am looking at God made small,
small enough for me,
small enough to pick up
and hold like a lamb.

I could not talk to a God in the clouds;
but tonight when I look and smile
and talk nonsense to this
tiny thing, I know that I am
talking to God.

And it is God who smiles
back at me and waves his
perfect hands in delight.
And tonight in your smallness, God,
you seem bigger and more powerful
to me than you ever did before.

I can hold you now,
hold you in my head
and hold you in my arms,
and know that you are holding me in yours.

HYMN No. 143 "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"

Infant holy, Infant lowly, for His bed a cattle stall;
Oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing, noels ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the Babe is Lord of all, Christ the Babe is Lord of all.

Flocks are sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new
Saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the Babe was born for you. Christ the Babe was born for you.

SCRIPTURE READING Colossians 3:12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

READING "In Case You're Crying on a Twin Bed at Your Parents' House at Any Time Today"
Whoever chose this reading for the day after Christmas must have known. You don't just accidentally pick a scripture that says 'bear with one another' for the #1 day when such advice is needed.

When the kids have nothing left to unwrap and turn to other forms of destruction. When siblings slip back into roles they thought they gave up decades ago. When the loaded comments you overlooked yesterday to keep things merry start to wear on you. When uncles turn to politics. When cousins get religious.

Colossians reads like the pep talk you deliver in a whisper after you roll off the mostly deflated air mattress: 'Let's rise to the occasion, clothe ourselves with love, and we'll leave after lunch.' Whoever chose it must have known.

And God knows too.

That's what it means to worship a God who became human. They know. They get it. They've been there. They are there. With you. Right now. On the air mattress. Trying to remember what your therapist said. White-knuckling your sobriety. Crying in your childhood bedroom.

God knows.

So, holy and beloved ones, when you've blown your nose and your eyes aren't so puffy, go join the *Monopoly* game that has not yet become a fight. Bear with one another. Forgive each other. Clothe yourselves with love. And leave after lunch.

Prayer: God you know how it is. Thank you.

(Vince Amlin, *Jesus Crisis*, 2021 Advent – Epiphany Devotional, United Church of Christ)

HYMN No. 157 "Away in a Manger"

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head;
The stars in the sky look down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven to live with Thee there.

PRAYER REQUESTS

For the family and friends of Cliff Hinze, who died unexpectedly this week. Cliff was best man in John and Dorothy Thielman's wedding and godfather to Christi.

PASTORAL PRAYER *"We Remember Your Promises"*

Here we are, Lord;
we are not many,
nor are we very wise
or powerful,
nor rich by the standards of the world,
but we do come
joyful and triumphant
on this special day,
because of what you have done.

On this day
we remember your promises
that you will never leave us
nor forsake us,
that you would show your love for us in a very special way,
that you would always let us know that you love us,
despite all our fears.

On this day
we joyfully remember you
creeping in very quietly
and very vulnerably
among us
in Jesus Christ, born of Mary.
Born to be with us,
born to love us,
born to save us,
born to free us.

Please forgive us
for forgetting all this so often,
for thinking of you in human terms -
for imagining you to be a fearsome
far-off sort of God,
angry and vengeful;
or thinking of you as a petulant parent,
rewarding us with sweets when we are good
and smacking us when we are bad.
Forgive us for blaming you when things go wrong
and ignoring you when we think we are in control;
for being so busy and caught up in our own concerns
that we don't even take time
to stop and listen to yours.

Help us
to come to your birthplace
and to your birthday.
Help us to let you enter our lives.
Speak your word of power in our hearts
and change us, once again.

(John Harvey, *Hay and Stardust*, Wild Goose Publications)

PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR (depts)

Hear us as we join our voices in the prayer that Jesus taught his friends: Our Father...

OFFERING

At the very heart of Christmas, there's a message of generosity. It takes root in the amazing gift God gave us in coming to live among us, and sending Jesus to be our teacher, Savior, guide and friend. And God's generosity triggers some of the same in us, as we work to find gifts for those we love and share some of what we have with those in need. I am very pleased to report that your generosity to the Wallace/Osburn Food Bank amounted to \$432.50, and your gifts to the Wallace Christmas Fund totalled \$387.50. Those gifts were sent on their way last week, and are well on their way to blessing the lives of those in need, while also communicating our care and compassion. Thank you for your part in those gifts.

It's not too late to participate in the United Church of Christ Christmas Fund, if you are inclined to do that. Our Christmas Eve offering is being sent in that direction and other gifts can certainly be added. It's a fund used to express gratitude and compassion for some retired clergy and long-term church employees. Last year, the fund enabled monthly pension supplements for 276 retired clergy and lay employees, totalling more than a million dollars. Health benefits were supplemented for 89 people, emergency grants went to 96 individuals and families, and Christmas thank you gifts were delivered to 504 clergy and lay employees. Thank you to all who have given.

And finally, a reminder that the church books will be closing on January 2. Any donations that you would like credited to this year should be dated no later than Dec. 31; they can be dropped off in the church mail slot or sent through the mail. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (in unison)

Thank you, God of love, for the promise of this season. We are grateful for the generosity aroused in us by Christ's coming into the world. May these gifts represent a new spirit of joyous sharing among us, for the sake of all your children everywhere. Amen. *(Chalice Worship)*

HYMN No. 132 *"Angels We Have Heard on High"*

Angels we have heard on high, Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply Echo back their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be, Which inspire your heavenly song? ...

Come to Bethlehem, and see Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King. ...

BENEDICTION

The blessing of God, whose love created light and darkness, mystery and wonder, be with you this day.
The blessing of God, whose love entered this world vulnerable, naked, and helpless, be with you always.

The blessing of God, whose love burns in your heart, transforming your living, send you into the world to be the incarnation of God's love for others. Amen. *(Chalice Worship)*