



*Please stand if you are able.

Leaders in Today's Worship Service

ACCOMPANIST: JILL KOHLER

LAY READER: CHRIS VAUSE

SONG LEADERS: GAIL GIRARD & SUSAN SPENCER

Minooka United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 819

Minooka, Illinois 60447

Office: (815) 467-2322

Website: minookaumc.com

Reverend Dave Buerstetta, Lead Pastor

Minooka United Methodist Church



Christmas Eve Service

Minooka United Methodist Church
Christmas Eve Service
9:00 PM - December 24, 2023

Isaiah 9:2-7 (The Message)

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light.
For those who lived in a land of deep shadows—
light! sunbursts of light!
You repopulated the nation,
you expanded its joy.
Oh, they're so glad in your presence!
Festival joy!
The joy of a great celebration,
sharing rich gifts and warm greetings.
The abuse of oppressors and cruelty of tyrants—
all their whips and clubs and curses—
Is gone, done away with, a deliverance
as surprising and sudden as Gideon's old victory over Midian.
The boots of all those invading troops,
along with their shirts soaked with innocent blood,
Will be piled in a heap and burned,
a fire that will burn for days!
For a child has been born—for us!
the gift of a son—for us!
He'll take over
the running of the world.
His names will be: Amazing Counselor,
Strong God,
Eternal Father,
Prince of Wholeness.
His ruling authority will grow,
and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings.
He'll rule from the historic David throne
over that promised kingdom.
He'll put that kingdom on a firm footing
and keep it going
With fair dealing and right living,
beginning now and lasting always.
The zeal of God-of-the-Angel-Armies
will do all this.

Luke 2:1-20 (The Voice)

¹Around the time of *Elizabeth's amazing pregnancy and John's birth, the emperor in Rome, Caesar Augustus, required everyone in the Roman Empire to participate in a massive census—* ²the first census since Quirinius had become governor of Syria. ³Each person had to go to his or her ancestral city to be counted.

⁴⁻⁵Mary's fiancé Joseph, from Nazareth in Galilee, had to participate in the census in the same way *everyone else did*. Because he was a descendant of *King David*, his ancestral city was Bethlehem, David's birthplace. Mary, who was now late in her pregnancy *that the messenger Gabriel had predicted,* ⁶accompanied Joseph. While in Bethlehem, she went into labor and gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped the baby in a blanket and laid Him in a feeding trough because the inn had no room for them.

⁸Nearby, in the fields outside of Bethlehem, a group of shepherds were guarding their flocks *from predators* in the darkness of night. ⁹Suddenly a messenger of the Lord stood in front of them, and the darkness was replaced by a glorious light—the shining light of God's glory. They were terrified!

Messenger: ¹⁰Don't be afraid! Listen! I bring good news, news of great joy, news that will affect all people everywhere. ¹¹Today, in the city of David, a Liberator has been born for you! He is the promised Anointed One, the Supreme Authority! ¹²You will know you have found Him when you see a baby, wrapped in a blanket, lying in a feeding trough.

¹³At that moment, the first heavenly messenger was joined by thousands of other messengers—a vast heavenly choir. They praised God.

¹⁴**Heavenly Choir:** To the highest heights of the universe, glory to God! And on earth, peace among all people who bring pleasure to God!

¹⁵As soon as the heavenly messengers disappeared into heaven, the shepherds were buzzing with conversation.

Shepherds: Let's rush down to Bethlehem right now! Let's see what's happening! Let's experience what the Lord has told us about!

¹⁶ So they ran into town, and *eventually* they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the feeding trough. After they saw the baby, ¹⁷ they spread the story of *what they had experienced and what* had been said to them about this child. ¹⁸ Everyone who heard their story couldn't stop thinking about its meaning. ¹⁹ Mary, too, pondered all of these events, treasuring each memory in her heart.

²⁰ The shepherds *returned to their flocks*, praising God for all they had seen and heard, and they glorified God for the way the experience had unfolded just as the heavenly messenger had predicted.

ENTERING MUSIC

Accompanist

WELCOMING

Pastor Dave

*SINGING

"O Come All Ye Faithful"

UMH #234, v1-3

1. *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;*

*Refrain: O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.*

2. *True God of true God, Light from Light Eternal,
lo, he shuns not the Virgin's womb;
Son of the Father, begotten, not created; (Refrain)*

3. *Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest; (Refrain)*

*GATHERING

Lay Reader

Reader: We waited.

Many Voices: We imagined a savior.

Reader: We imagined power.

Many Voices: A savior like the world, but stronger and on our side.

Reader: We imagined a king on a white horse wielding a sword.

Many Voices: We got a baby born in a stable among the livestock.

Reader: We imagined the work done for us through the destruction of our enemies.

Many Voices: We receive a baby who teaches us that our calling is to be compassionate, to seek justice, and to love expansively.

Reader: Praise be to God for the unexpected, unlikely babe of Bethlehem.

Many Voices: We give thanks for the wisdom of love. Amen!

LIGHTING THE ADVENT and CHRIST CANDLES The Buerstetta family
Singing Introduction "Light the Advent Candle" TFWS #2090, v1-4

1. *Light the Advent candle, one:
Now the waiting has begun;
We have started on our way,
Time to think of Christmas day.*

*Chorus: Candle, candle, burning bright,
Shining in the cold winter night;
Candle, candle, burning bright,
Fill our hearts with Christmas light.*

2. *Light the Advent candles, two:
Think of humble shepherds, who
Filled with wonder at the sight
Of the child of Christmas night. (Chorus)*

3. *Light the Advent candles, three:
Think of heavenly harmony; angels singing
"Peace on earth" at the blessed Savior's birth. (Chorus)*

4. *Light the Advent candles, four:
Think of joy forevermore;
Christ Child in a stable born,
Gift of love that Christmas morn. (Chorus)*

Reader: Because injustice and despair threaten to overwhelm us, we pray for hope.

(Light a purple candle.)

Reader: Because so many swords have not yet been beaten into farming tools, we pray for peace.

(Light a purple candle.)

Reader: Because grief and loss weigh so heavily, we pray for joy.

(Light the pink candle.)

Reader: Because hatred is still so strong, and because people all over the world are suffering, we pray for love.

(Light a purple candle.)

Reader: God enters our world as a child. In Jesus, Emmanuel, God draws near to us.

(Light the Christ candle.)

Many Voices: May the light and the fire from these candles burn away everything that is preventing the God of hope, peace, joy, and love from being born through us. Amen!

Singing Response "Light the Advent Candle" TFWS #2090, v5

*5. Light the Christmas candles, now:
Sing of donkey, sheep, and cow;
Birthday candles for the King.
Let the alleluias ring.*

*Chorus: Candle, candle, burning bright,
Shining in the cold winter night;
Candle, candle, burning bright,
Fill our hearts with Christmas light.*

PRAYING

Lay Reader

(Silent, centering prayer that we may become present in this moment to the Holy One)

Reader: For the celebrations of the season, God of us all, we thank you. For the joy this night brings, Loving God, we thank you. In our thankfulness we are conscious of those places and people for whom little celebration or joy exists. We are mindful of those mourning, where an empty chair at the table will bring renewed aching to already tender hearts.
(quiet reflection)

Reader: We are mindful of those with no feast to enjoy, cupboards that are empty and stomachs that rumble. We are mindful of those for whom there is no peace on earth, living under siege or fearful of incoming missiles.
(quiet reflection)

Reader: We are mindful of and grateful to those who will be working to ensure essential services can still be provided. We are mindful of those separated from loved ones, where the miles or broken relationships are keeping them apart.
(quiet reflection)

Reader: Guide us in our efforts to help those needing love and care, mindful that we can be the answer to our own prayers. All this we pray in the name of the Christ Child who would teach us to pray, saying...(Lord's Prayer #894)

*SINGING

"The First Noel"

UMH #245, v1-2

*1. The first Noel the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.*

*Refrain: Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
Born is the King of Israel.*

*2 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. (Refrain)*

GIVING

Blessing our Gifts with Music and Prayer

Many Voices: Loving God, this night our hearts are full. May our response be generous. May our gifts be welcome. May our time and work bear fruit. Take who we are, what we can offer, and use us to share your love, born this night. Amen.

SHARING MUSICAL GIFTS

"Little Town"

Susan Spencer

READING SCRIPTURE

Lay Reader

Prophetic Lesson Isaiah 9:2-7 (The Message)

Gospel Lesson Luke 2:1-20 (The Voice)

Reader: Prince of Peace, bless the reading, hearing, and living of these words.

Many Voices: Amen.

*SINGING

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

UMH #238, v1-3

*1. Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.*

*Refrain: Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*

*2. Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly song? (Refrain)*

*3. Come to Bethlehem and see
Christ whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King. (Refrain)*

PROCLAIMING *"When God Shows Up"* *Pastor Dave*

***SINGING and CANDLE LIGHTING** *"Silent Night"*
(As "Silent Night" (UMH #239) is sung and lights are dimmed, Pastor Dave will light a candle from the Christ candle and then light the candle of the first person at the end of each aisle. As the light is passed down your pew, keep the lit candle upright and tip the unlit candle. Before leaving the pew, please extinguish your candles. Battery candles are available for children.)

- 1. 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.*
- 2. 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!*
- 3. Silent night, holy night, Son 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.*
- 4. Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light;
With the angels let us sing,
Alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!*

CELEBRATING HOLY COMMUNION

Pastor Dave: Here is bread....Good News for the world, with a headline that says: Let all who are hungry for justice come and eat.

Here is wine....Good News for all who long, with a headline that says: Let all who thirst for righteousness come and drink.

Here is the table....Good News for all who are lost, with a headline that says: All who are weary come and gather here.

Many Voices: Here is community....Good News for all whom the world ignores, with a headline that says: Behold I make all things new. Come and be renewed.

Here is Jesus...Good News for all who wait, with a headline that says: I have come that all may have life.

Pastor Dave: We remember that night when Jesus took bread, gave thanks for it, broke it, and shared it with his friends saying:

Many Voices: This bread is broken, as my body will be broken. Eat and remember all that I have been for you.

Pastor Dave: We remember that night Jesus poured a cup of wine, gave thanks for it, and shared it with his friends, saying:

Many Voices: This wine is poured out, as my life will be poured out. Drink and remember all that I have given you.

(The United Methodist Church offers open Communion. That means all are welcome at this table. Today we serve by intinction: lightly dip the piece of bread into the cup then eat. Self-contained packets of bread and juice are available upon request. All the bread is gluten free.)

PRAYING after RECEIVING

Pastor Dave: Thank You, Loving God, for breaking into our world, our lives, and our experience. Thank You, Christ our Redeemer, for this meal of remembering and the stories of love and grace that it tells.

Many Voices: Thank You, Spirit of Life, for Your Presence with us and Your challenge to us to become agents of Your compassion in the world. Amen.

***SINGING** *"Joy to the World"* UMH #246

- 1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.*

2. Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

4. He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

***SENDING FORTH**

Pastor Dave

EXITING MUSIC

Accompanist

Merry Christmas!



To help neighbors experiencing homelessness, please consider making a financial gift to our Christmas Offering. **Generosity is a core value here at MUMC, so a tithe (the first 10%) of the Christmas Offering will go to our partners at the Daybreak Center In Joliet.** Daybreak provides emergency and short-term housing alongside support services to help clients establish permanent housing. The remainder of the Christmas Offering will go to our General Fund which maintains our mission, ministry, and church home.