

Rocky Hill Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Order of Worship
‡ Christmas Eve ‡

Saturday, December 24, 2011

11:00 p.m.

SCRIPTURAL AFFIRMATION

Selected verses from Isaiah 9

PRELUDE

“O Holy Night”

Rose Lewis, soloist

WELCOME AND THE SHARING OF PEACE

The Rev. Donna K. Manocchio

We welcome you to worship this Christmas Eve, and extend a special greeting to our visitors. Our service is enriched by your presence! If you would like to be on our mailing list, please sign the pew pad and include your name and address, or email information.

*** CALL TO WORSHIP**

Meghan D. Young

Leader: We once walked in darkness, but tonight we walk in light.

People: We once lived in sorrow, but tonight we live in joy!

Leader: Our burdens have been lifted and laid in a manger of love.

People: A child has given us hope, mercy, grace, and peace.

Leader: We gather this evening with thanks and praise,

People: to witness the gift of a child,

Leader: Christ Jesus, the promised one, the light of God’s redeeming love.

People: We rejoice in God’s miraculous gift!

* HYMN

“O, Come All Ye Faithful”

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;

Chorus:

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;

Chorus

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?

Chorus

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning,
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;

Chorus

* LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH AND
THE CHRIST CANDLE

Response: *(Choir and Congregation sing together)*

**Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the
plains, and the mountains in reply, echoing the joyous
strains. “Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!”**

Leader: Can you imagine the shepherds' surprise at seeing a choir of
angels singing with joy the news of Christ birth? Can you sense
the wonder? Do you perhaps share their fear?

People: Joy and fear join hands this night. Hope and despair are well known to us. But we have heard the news – Christ is born! And after weeks of waiting and watching, we are ready to celebrate! We are ready to worship the Holy Child. We are ready to welcome Christ into our hearts.

Leader: The Gospel of Luke reads that the shepherds heard the news and then went off to Bethlehem to find the newborn babe, the hope of the ages, God’s Promised One! These four familiar flames now familiar to us, will light our way to the Christ child’s side.

We light the four Advent candles.

Response: *(Choir and congregation sing together)*
Shepherds why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong? What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav’nly song? “Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Leader: People of God, your waiting in darkness is over. The Light of God’s promise has dawned. Even now Christ the Child, Christ the Savior, seeks entrance into our hearts.

We light the Christ candle.

People: God of joy and jubilee, fill our hearts with the light of your promise. Enter our lives as softly and quietly as a child so we might learn to love you in simplicity and purity of heart. Come into our hearts with power and compassion, that we might always draw strength from your abiding presence in our lives. Thank you, holy God, for your gift of love, born to us this night. Amen.

Response: *(Choir and congregation sing together)*
Come to Bethlehem and see Christ, who comes in lowly birth. Come adore on bended knee Jesus, joy of heav’n and earth. “Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

*CHRISTMAS PRAYER (*unison*)

Holy Child, we come to your manger on this Christmas Eve, filled with wonder and awe for your presence among us. As you came to us on that first Christmas Eve, come to us now. Enter our hearts and our worship, that we might recognize the shining light of your love and grace. In your loving name we pray. Amen.

A READING FROM THE GOSPELS

Luke 2:1-20

ANTHEM

“What Child Is This?”

arranged by Patti Drennan

Chris Mosure, alto saxophone

A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

The Rev. Donna K. Manocchio

OFFERING INVITATION

This year’s Christmas Offering goes to support our covenantal partners at Rupert Congregational Church, UCC in Rupert, Vermont, as they recover from damages from Hurricane Irene.

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

“Ding Dong! Merrily On High”

16th century French tune arranged by Charles Wood

The Choir

*DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise him, all creatures here below;

Praise him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. A - men. -

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

* HYMN

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing, and voices ring with peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the glorious love of heaven.
No one discerns God’s coming, but in this world of strife,
Where yearning souls receive God still, comes Christ the bread of life.

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION AND

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Leader: Loving God, with this bread and cup we remember your Word
dwelling among us, full of grace and truth.

We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.

We look with hope for his coming.

People: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: Holy God, we long for your Spirit:

Come among us. Bless this meal. Make your Word take flesh in us.

Awaken your people. Fill us with your light.

Bring the gift of peace on earth.

People: Come, Holy Spirit!

Leader: All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Blessing, Word of God
incarnate, Power of the Most High, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

Leader: Lord Jesus, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

All: *Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

REMEMBERING THE WORDS AND DEEDS OF JESUS

RECEIVING THE BREAD AND CUP

An Open Table!

At Rocky Hill Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, we believe that the table is not ours, but Christ's. Therefore, anyone, including children, who wish to know the presence of Christ and the community of God's people is welcome to receive, regardless of denominational affiliation, church membership or place on the faith journey. This is a joyful feast for all the people of God!

Tonight, communion will be served at the manger. Please come forward by the center aisle, and take a piece of bread, dip it into the cup and consume. Gluten free elements are available, and all cups contain non-alcoholic grape juice. After you have received, return to your seat by the side aisles. A deacon will come to the balcony for those sitting upstairs. If for any reason, you desire to remain in your seat, the deacons will take note, and communion will be brought to you.

MUSIC DURING COMMUNION

“The Star Carol”

by Alfred Burt

Melody Hall, soprano

“One Quiet Moment”

arranged by Tom Fettke

Melody Hall, soprano

Arlene Painter, alto

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (*unison*)

Radiant God, with our eyes we have seen your salvation, and in this meal we have feasted on your grace. May your Word take flesh in us, that we may be your holy people, revealing your glory made known to us in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

* SHARING OF THE CHRIST LIGHT

To symbolize the coming of Christ, the Light of the World, we will pass light from the Christ Candle. We will gather in a circle around the sanctuary before the candles are lit. We invite you to put on your coat and gather your belongings before leaving your seat. Once all are in a circle and the lights are dimmed, we will proceed to light candles around the room. Please pass the light around the circle by tipping your unlighted candle to receive the light. Once lighted, please hold your candle upright.

Please stay in place until we have sung the benediction response. Extinguish your candle before moving and leave your candle in the baskets as you depart.

* HYMN

“Silent Night”

Choir sings verse 1; congregation sings verses 2-4

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.

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.

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.

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.

* BENEDICTION

BENEDICTION RESPONSE

“Joy to the World!”

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room, and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and heav'n and nature sing.

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.

* POSTLUDE

“He Is Born, The Divine Christ Child”

setting by Douglas E. Wagner

Please greet your neighbor with the joy of Jesus' birth!

USHERS AND COMMUNION SERVERS

Gail Tine and Lynn Webster

The members, friends and staff of Rocky Hill Congregational Church
wish you a joyous and blessed Christmas!



Epiphany Pageant

Each year we worship in wonder and mystery, bringing the story of Christmas and Epiphany to light, as worship leaders of ALL ages put on costumes and remember through word and action, the birth story of our faith. The dress rehearsal will be **Saturday, January 7th, 10 AM – 12 PM**. The Epiphany Pageant will take place on January 8th, at 10 AM (all pageant participants should gather at 9 AM).



Join the Fun – Get involved with S.P.I.R.I.T.

S.P.I.R.I.T. Church School and Youth Group will resume on January 15th, with Unit 3, “Jesus the Teacher”. **We are currently looking for 2 Learning Center Guides**, for our Food & People center (teaches the bible story through food and cooking), and our Community Life center (connects the bible stories to mission projects). If you are interested, please contact Meghan Young (meghan@rhccucc.org) for more information.

CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS OFFERING

On Sunday, December 18, the Children of the S.P.I.R.I.T. Church School contributed to a special Christmas Offering during Children’s Chapel. The offering, which raised \$111, was used to buy holiday gifts for children at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center. The idea for a children’s Christmas offering came directly from the children of RHCC. Thank you to all who supported this offering of joy!



EPIPHANY GATHERING

Friday, January 6th, 5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Come rejoice in the wonder, mystery and joy of the light of God made known to us in Jesus Christ. Join us for a simple supper, fellowship, and worship, as we celebrate the festival of Epiphany. Please sign-up in Chapin Hall or email meghan@rhccucc.org, to let us know you’re coming.

Rocky Hill Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Open and Affirming Statement

Because we believe that all people are created in God's image and thus are blessed and loved equally by God, and because love is a unifying and strengthening force within our Christian Faith,

We, the members of the Rocky Hill Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, hereby declare ourselves an Open and Affirming Christian community, actively expressing Jesus' inclusive embrace of all people.

We welcome all who seek to follow Jesus, including persons of every age, gender, race, national origin, faith background, marital status and family structure, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, mental and physical ability, economic and social status, and educational background, to share in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings and joys of our church family.

Jesus teaches us to welcome all God's children into God's covenantal community. As we grow together in faith and love, we will strive to celebrate the diversity in which God has created in us.—*Voted in by congregational vote June 2009*

Ministry Team

Ministers: All the members of the church

Senior Pastor: The Reverend Donna K. Manocchio donna@rhccucc.org

Acting Associate Pastor: Meghan Davis Young meghan@rhccucc.org

Acting Director of Christian Education: Meghan Davis Young meghan@rhccucc.org

Pastor Emeritus: The Reverend Arthur C. Weil

Director of Music: William Kanute music@rhccucc.org

Church Office: Carol Harvey office@rhccucc.org 860-529-4167

Webmaster: Dave Hall webmaster@rhccucc.org / Church Website: rhccucc.org



In our joy, we think we hear a whisper.
At first it is too soft.
Then only half heard.
We listen carefully as it gathers strength.
We hear a sweetness.
The word is PEACE.

We tremble at the sound.
We are thrilled by its presence.
It is what we have hungered for:
Not just the absence of war. But true Peace.
A harmony of spirit, and comfort of courtesies.
Security for our beloveds and their beloveds.

We, angels and mortals, believers and non-believers,
Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.
Peace. We look at each other, then into ourselves,
And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation:

Peace, my brother.
Peace, my sister.
Peace, my soul.

From *Amazing Peace* by Maya Angelou