

**ROCKY HILL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

Established 1727 ~ An Open and Affirming Community



**Christmas Evening Worship Service
December 24, 2016
11:00 p.m.**

~ORDER OF WORSHIP~

Welcome to Rocky Hill Congregational Church, UCC, this evening. We're glad you have joined us for Christmas Eve worship, and we wish everyone a blessed and joyous Christmas. Hearing-assist devices are available for this service, please ask an usher.

PRELUDES

"Carol of the Bells"	Ukrainian Carol
"Sleep O Lovely Child"	Italian Carol
Three Settings of "Away in The Manger"	Susan C. Carson
"The Holly and the Ivy"	Traditional Carol
Gail Hall, clarinet; Dave Hall, cello	

WELCOME AND GREETING

INTROIT

"Once in Royal David's City" vs 1 and 2
The Choir with Victoria Bower, soprano

OPENING PRAYER

*HYMN

"O Come, All Ye Faithful" Pilgrim Hymnal (red) 132

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Through the season of Advent, we have been watching, waiting, praying,
for the coming of light into the world.

**We have lit the candles of hope, peace, joy and love,
longing for the day when the things of darkness –
selfishness and greed, suffering and oppression –
shall be no more.**

Tonight we light the Christ candle
as we celebrate the birth of the one in whom God's light has come.
We pray that as we follow him in the ways of love,
God's light will be born anew in us and in our world.

The Christ candle is lit.

**Please rise in body or in spirit.*

**Bold type denotes collective response.*

May the light of Christ illumine the past,
that we might learn from it with thankfulness,
illumine the present, that we might live in it with love,
illumine the future, that we might prepare for it in hope.

**Thanks be to God for light and the promise of light,
now and always.**

SCRIPTURE READING

Proverbs 8:1, 22-31

OT p.553 Pew Bible

Wisdom Plays and the World is Made

PRAYER

O God, our Creator
In your Wisdom we see the reflection
of your only begotten Son,
Jesus, the Christ.
As Wisdom played at your side to make the world,
teach us joyfully to engage the world
with your beloved Son,
together to make all things new.

***HYMN**

“Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”

New Century (black) 127

SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 9: 2; 6-7

OT p.598 Pew Bible

God’s Faithfulness Redeems Us

PRAYER

O God our Redeemer,
when we have strayed from your paths
You light our way home,
and send us your Holy One to guide the way.
Let us follow in the way of your Light,
walking faithfully with You
in the paths of justice and peace
which lead to abundant life.

Thanks be to God.

***HYMN**

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

New Century (black) 128

SCRIPTURE READING:

Matthew 1: 18-23

NT p.1 Pew Bible

Joseph Dreams of God-With-Us

PRAYER

O God of depth and mystery,
You call us beyond convention
to a way of risky faithfulness.
Fill our dreams with your truth
and our minds with your discernment
so that we, like Joseph,
may awaken with confidence and joy
to expand our lives and make room for You.

DUET

“O Holy Night”

Adolphe Adam

Victoria Bower, soprano; Jillian Maynard, mezzo-soprano

SCRIPTURE READING:

Luke 2: 1-7

NT p.50 Pew Bible

Jesus is Born

PRAYER

O fragile Savior
You come, unprotected, into our dangerous world
and offer yourself as our peace.
Let our joy be to seek your peace
let our hope be to foster your peace
let our purpose be to announce your Peace
with all the fervor of the angels and all the courage of the poor:
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, God's peace!

***HYMN**

“Joy to the World”

Pilgrim Hymnal (red) 130

(in verse 2, please substitute “all” for “men” if you wish)

OFFERTORY

Offertory Anthem “Love Came Down at Christmas” Daniel Gawthrop
The Choir
Katie Hoffman-Fulda, flute

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

CHRISTMAS PRAYER

THE SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

This church practices open Communion; all are welcome to participate, regardless of church membership or denominational affiliation.

We will receive Communion by coming forward for intinction (dipping the bread into the cup, which holds non-alcoholic grape juice). Gluten-free bread and juice are also offered.

The coming forward will begin with the choir. Please follow the lead of the ushers, who will then guide the congregation, row by row. After you have received Communion, please take a candle and join in the encircling of the sanctuary for the passing of candlelight.

If you wish to receive Communion in your pew, please raise your hand to identify yourself to a Deacon.

Invitation

In the beauty of this holy night, we come to the table of the Lord.
As shepherds came seeking the Christ child,
as they opened their hearts to adore,
we too come seeking Christ, opening our hearts to his love.

**What a mystery to us, what gift of grace,
that the ordinary things of earth
are touched with heaven –
full with the presence of God!**

God's word takes flesh and dwells among us,
God's grace takes form and is shared among us...

**God's love for us in a manger,
God's love for us at a table,
God's love for us in Christ.**

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, we confess that often we find darkness more comfortable than light. We confess that we find your good news frightening and unsettling, especially when we consider its demands as well as its promises. We confess that Christmas has become more to us than the birthday of the Christ, partly because we do not want a Christ-Child in our lives or in our world. Forgive us, break us, bend us, remake us. Give us the courage to lay ourselves open to the wonder and healing of your coming. Be born again into our world, be born again into our hearts and lives. Hear now our silent and personal confessions as we prepare ourselves for your nativity.

Assurance of Pardon:

The true light that enlightens all has come into the world. That light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to put it out. This is the good news: God has heard our confession. God has forgiven our sin. ☒

Thanks be to God!

Recalling the Story: The Words of Institution

Sharing of the Bread and the Cup

Communion Music: Carols from around the world

Prayer of Thanksgiving

***CAROL AND THE LIGHTING OF CANDLES**

“Silent Night”

Pilgrim Hymnal (red) 138

*As the candlelight is passed from person to person around the circle, please tip unlit candles only.
Extinguished candles may be placed in the baskets as you leave the sanctuary.*

*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, 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, 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.*

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

“Pat-a-Pan”

USHERS

Rob, Emily, and Megan Grandell, and Candy Smith

Thank you for coming. May you have a blessed and joyous Christmas!

Rocky Hill Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

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