

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

*Evangelical Reformed
United Church of Christ*
An Open and Affirming Congregation

15 West Church Street
Frederick, Maryland

24 December 2023 ~ 7:30 PM

**All who are able may stand*

(We are grateful for your presence this evening as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, God with us, Emmanuel. We kindly ask that you silence your cell phones and any other things that might beep or chirp. We also ask that you refrain from applause after our choirs perform and allow the music to resonate in the quiet of the sanctuary and in your hearts. Our musicians are playing and singing for the glory of God. This is their expression of joy at the birth of Jesus. They know you appreciate their efforts and their gift.)

Words of Welcome

The Rev. David Cooney

Prelude

Traditional French Carols

Cathy Fronck, trumpet; Jeffrey Baker, trombone

He Is Born, the Holy Child (Il est Né, le Divin Enfant) ~ arr. D. Gilliam/M. McCaskill

What Is This Lovely Frangrance? (Quelle est Cette Odeur Agéable) ~ arr. L. Smith

Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella (Un Flambeau, Jeanette Isabelle) ~ arr. D. Gilliam/M. McCaskill

Threshold Moment

Katie Zander

There is Room

The world may feel like one long stretch of night,
like an endless winter, or a hovering rain cloud.

And life may feel like walking into the wind,
an uphill climb in every direction,
but we can still open the door.

We can't calm every storm,
but we can turn on the porch lights.

We can add chairs to the table.

We can keep clean sheets on the guest bed,
just in case.

We can hold the elevator,
and learn pronouns.

We can tell stories of belonging,
and take turns listening.

We can learn each other's names,
and plant trees for our children.

We can study privilege
and advocate for mental health.

We can insist,
every single day,
in a million different ways:
there is room,
there is room,
there is room for you here.

We can't calm every storm,
but we can turn on the porch lights.

***Proclamation Carol**

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!
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

O sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation!
Sing all ye citizens of heaven above!
Now to our God be Glory in the highest!
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

Amen, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning,
O Jesus, forever be Thy Name adored;
Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing!
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

***Prayer**

Loving God,
We have heard this story before ---
the story of a star in the sky and a baby who was laid in a manger.

We have heard this story before ---
passed down in hopeful whispers through the generations.

So this night, as we lean our hearts and our ears closer to you,
we ask that you would make room in our souls to hear this story again.

Make room in us for awe.
Make room in us for wonder.
Make room for heartache and compassion.
Make room in our hearts for you.

Pull us into this narrative,
that we may hear the truths in this ancient Word as if for the first time.
For we know that you are still speaking.
So speak to us again this night.
We are listening.
We are already making room.
Amen.

The Lighting of the Christ Candle

Quynn Adkins

How does a weary world hold onto hope, practice peace, spread joy, or know love?

How does a weary world combat cruelty?

How does a weary world shine a light into our bleakest night?

We do all these things with God's help.

For tonight a child is born in Bethlehem.

Tonight, Christ draws near.

Tonight, we light the Christ Candle.

Tonight, we are not alone.

God is near. Love has drawn close. Rejoice! For God loves this weary world. Amen.

Scripture Reading ~ Luke 2: 1–7

***Carol**

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.

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!

So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven;

No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,

Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in.

O Holy Child of Bethlehem! Descend to us, we pray;

Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;

O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel!

Scripture Reading ~ Luke 2: 8–20

***Carol**

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled."
Joyful, all you nations rise; Join the triumph of the skies;
with angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold him come, Offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see! Hail, incarnate deity!
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

Hail the heav'n born Prince of Peace! Hail the sun of righteousness.
Light and life to all he brings, Ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, Born that we no more may die,
Born to raise each child of earth, Born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

Christmas Meditation

The Rev. David Cooney

Anthem

Senior Choir

Jesus, What a Wonderful Child / Amen ~ arr. J. Raney

Christmas Evening Prayer and Lord's Prayer

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, for ever. Amen.

The Christmas Eve Offering for The Christmas Fund

(Meeting emergency needs of the United Church of Christ's retired clergy and spouses)

Anthem

Senior Choir

O Magnum Mysterium ~ M. Lauridsen

O magnum mysterium,
et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum,
jacentum in praesepe!
O beata virgo, cujus viscera
meruerunt portare
Dominum Christum.
Alleluia!

O great mystery,
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the newborn Lord,
lying in a manger!
O blessed virgin, whose womb
was worthy to bear
the Lord Jesus Christ.
Alleluia!

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Holy God,
We have been waiting a long time for this night—
for the joy and the quiet of Christmas Eve,
for the sound of the angel chorus,
for the old familiar songs.
We have carried weary hearts through the last four weeks of Advent,
longing for the peace and hope of this night,
and now we're finally here.

So as we bow our heads, we offer you our most earnest and honest prayers,
trusting that once again, you meet us where we are.

Anthem

Senior Choir

O Holy Night ~ A. Adam, arr. C. Courtney

The Gift of the Light

Scripture Readings on Light

A Celebration of the Light ~ Candle Lighting

(Light your candle by tilting it toward the candle giving the flame, then push the flame guard up to surround the flame and protect those nearby.)

***Carol**

Silent Night, Holy Night

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!
Darkness flies, all is light;
Shepherds hear the angels sing:
Alleluia! Hail the King!
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born.

Silent night! Holy night!
Guiding Star, lend thy light!
See the eastern wise men bring
gifts and homage to our King!
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born.

Silent night! Holy night!
Wondrous Star, lend thy light!
With the angels let us sing
Alleluia to our King!
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born.

***Benediction**

Family of faith,
as you leave this place,
you go into a weary world—
so speak tenderly.
Do the good that is yours to do.
Choose connection.
Hold onto hope.
And remember
that Christ took on flesh for you.
You are God’s beloved.
So go rejoicing.
The world needs it.
Amen.

***Recessional Carol**

(We may take our lighted candles out into the night's darkness so that the Light of Christ will shine in our homes and communities.)

Joy to the World

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.

Joy to the earth! The Saviour 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.

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.

Postlude

Provençal Carol

Cathy Fronck, trumpet; Jeffrey Baker, trombone

March of the Three Kings ~ G. Bizet, arr. S. Mitchell-Wallace / J. H. Head

Welcome to all who seek the love of God on this sacred night.

May the peace of Christ be with us all this blessed Christmas Eve!

We are grateful to all who have given of themselves to inspire our devotion on this beautiful evening. We are especially grateful to the members and directors of our choirs, our deacons and greeters, and our audio-visual team. We also offer our heartfelt thanks to our organist Alison E. Shafer; our trombonist Jeffrey Baker and trumpeter Cathy Fronck. We thank them all for their devotion and generosity!

Christmas Fund Offering

For over a century, the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a tangible expression of God's love and light in the world. The Christmas Fund provides UCC congregations and members an opportunity to reach out in kindheartedness to those who have faithfully shepherded our Church and who now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs. We will receive this offering on Christmas Eve. Look for purple envelopes in the pews.

About Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ

Founded 278 years ago by Frederick County's first settlers, this church is firmly rooted in the life of our community and is regarded as a landmark church of the City of Frederick.

We are an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ, dedicated to serving God and our neighbors near and far. We are a dynamic and diverse congregation in every way. Sunday is just one of days in the week when our church is active. Our sanctuary and Community Room host educational, spiritual and recreational programming. Children's voices fill the air, adults gather for Bible study, and we work tirelessly for social justice.

We share space in our hearts and buildings with the community. Each week, hundreds of community members come through our doors. Our church hosts dozens of nonprofit organizations that use our space for little to no cost. We do so because we know the profoundly positive impact this has on Frederick County and the quality of life we want everyone to have.

Trinity Chapel's colonial steeple, recognized for miles around as the oldest of the "clustered spires of Frederick," rests atop the original stone tower built in 1763, which also hosts the City of Frederick's Town Clock. Restorations on the Historic Clock Tower will begin in 2024. Our 8:30 AM Sunday morning communion service, our 10:30 AM traditional worship service, and our Christian Education classes for children, youth, and adults take place in the large Greek Revival church built in 1848.

You can support the work of ERUCC in our community by sharing a donation in the plates at the rear of the sanctuary or via our online giving option at www.erucc.org.

Information about Evangelical Reformed Church is available in the literature racks by the church doors. We ask our visitors to sign the blue welcome cards in the pews and return it to a greeter so we will know of your visit with us, and we invite you to take any pamphlet that may be of interest to you. You can also visit our web page at www.erucc.org where you will find more information about the church and current ministries and programs.

Sunday Schedule

8:30-9:15 AM ~ Worship with Communion & Healing Prayer

9:30-10:15 AM ~ Sunday School classes for all ages

10:30-11:30 AM ~ Worship Service

11:30 AM ~ Fellowship

Trained paid nursery attendant for children up to age 4.

Ministers and Staff of Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ

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The Rev. Dr. Barbara Kershner Daniel ~ *Pastor Emerita*

The Rev. Fred Wenner ~ *Pastor Emeritus*

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