



Rangeley Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Rangeley, Maine

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An Open and Affirming Church
A Candlelight Festival of Story and Carols

December 24, 2023

5:00 PM

ORDER OF WORSHIP

OUR GATHERING AND PRAISE

RINGING OF THE BELL

PRELUDE

“Ding Dong! Merrily on High”

Traditional French Carol/Arr. Mark Hayes

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Liturgist

CALL TO WORSHIP

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder.

**And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.**

Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all people
will see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

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.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all 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.

CELEBRATION OF ADVENT

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

Reader: When the angel Gabriel visited Mary, she sings to Elizabeth:

My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.

We, like Mary, hear God's call to be part of making God's dream for our salvation and flourishing a reality. We question, "How can this

be? I am only..." Yet, like Mary, God's love can transform us into bearers of good news.

Unison: We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, our just peace, our fierce joy, and the love that transforms us. May Love grow within us, transforming us into bold witnesses of God's salvation with our voices and our lives.

Light the four outer candles of the Advent wreath.

Reader: Tonight, we come seeking hope, peace, joy, and love, and we find these things in a child that God made flesh as a baby in a manger. A baby who is both the beginning and the end of our salvation, who dwells with us even now, our Emmanuel, God with us.

Unison: We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, our just peace, our fierce joy, the love that transforms us, and Jesus Christ, our wondrous Light. May the Light burning in our hearts guide us, comfort us, protect us, and tend us in all seasons and circumstances. May we be reminded that, day and night, in the light and in the darkness, God is with us. Amen.

The Christ candle is lit.

Sung Response: **One Candle is Lit**

Tune: MUELLER/Words: Mary Anne Parrott

Come surely, Lord Jesus, as dawn follows night,
our hearts long to greet you, as roses, the light.
Salvation, draw near us, our vision engage.
One candle is lit for the hope of the age.

Come quickly, shalom, teach us how to prepare
for a gift that compels us with justice to care.
Our spirits are restless till sin and war cease.
One candle is lit for the reign of God's peace.

Come, festively sing while awaiting the birth,
join angels in dancing from heaven to earth.
Wave banners of good news, lift high thankful praise.
One candle is lit for the joy of these days.

Come, wander where lion and lamb gently play,
where evil is banished and faith takes the day,
a babe in a manger to fool the world's eyes.
One candle is lit for God's loving surprise.

Come, listen, the sounds of God-with-us ring clear,
and signs of a cross in the distance appear.
The Word once made flesh, yet the Word ever near.
One candle is lit for the Christ-birthday here.

CAROL

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold!
Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven's all

gracious King! The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the
angels sing.

For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophet bards foretold,
When, with the ever-circling years, comes round the age of
gold; When peace shall over all the earth its ancient
splendors fling, And the whole world send back the song
which now the angels sing.

A CHRISTMAS EVE REFLECTION

CAROL

"Away in a Manger"

Away in a manger, no crib for His bed.
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked 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.

A CHRISTMAS EVE PRAYER

O God, Emmanuel: indeed you are with us,
for we have heard the promise of the prophets.
We have caught the notes of the angels' song.
We have seen a star in the heavens and we, too, believe.

Tonight we have come to be with you because you have come to be with us. Tonight we seek an innocent, helpless baby in a crude manger.

Tonight we seek a Messiah who will reign with justice and compassion.

In love you have sought us. By your grace we have been found.

Beginning tonight, may we love each other with renewed conviction, remembering all that you have done for us.

Tonight, let us resoundingly proclaim the Good News that God's love, incarnate in our Savior Jesus Christ, is born again.

Amen and Amen!

OUR 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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY *"O Holy Night"* (Cantique de Noël)
Music: Adolphe Adam/Words: John Dwight
Erin Smith

Our offerings this night will find a home in one of two places: the red Christmas Fund envelope is a dedicated offering for the United Church of

Christ's "Christmas Fund" which assists retired pastors in need of food and shelter. All loose offerings will go to the Church's General Operating Fund which will provide fuel assistance and other local assistance.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY: A SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

Reading: Luke 2:1-7 The Journey to Bethlehem and the Birth of the Child

CAROL

"What Child Is This?"

What child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the king,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary

Why lies he in such mean estate
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.

This, this is Christ the king,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary.

Reading: Luke 2:8-12 The Announcement to the Shepherds

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.

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 to God the King, and peace to all on earth!

Reading: Luke 2:13-14

The Gloria

CAROL

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains
Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Come to Bethlehem and see Him
whose birth the angels sing; Come,

adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Reading: Luke 2:15-20 The Shepherds' Visit to the Holy Child

CAROL

"Joy to the World! the Lord is Come"

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 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.

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.

A CHRISTMAS BLESSING

SHARING OF THE LIGHT

*Please remember that the lighted candle remains upright, and the
unlighted candle is tipped to be lit.*

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.

*A joyful welcome to both nearby and far away visitors and guests! We
bless you with joyful wishes for a very Merry Christmas!
Please come and worship with us again! May your Christmas be blessed!*

Special thanks to all who participated in preparing and offering to our service tonight. We thank our readers tonight: Janice Bredeau and Lily Stevens, Don Miller, Sarah Johnson, and Linda Caspar.

- Pastor Scott Hatfield, **Leading Christmas Eve Worship Service**
- Erin Smith, **Tonight's Special Music**
- Linda Caspar, **Liturgist**
- Lucy Simonds & Zenna Inness, **Deacons of the Week**
- Lucy Simonds, **Zoomigo**

~Next Week:

- There will be NO Service, Dec 31st
Happy New Year!

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