

The Lockport United Church of Christ
Candlelight Communion Service

December 24, 2013

11:00 P.M.

“ On this night, God’s gift of love steals quietly into our hearts again.”

Prelude

The Wexford Carol by Orla Fallon

Call to Worship

L: At Christmas we celebrate the coming of God to earth in human form.
P: The shepherds listen to the songs of angels,
L: And the sages follow the stars,
P: *But the glory of God shines in a manger.*
L: “Go, tell it on the mountain,
P: *Over the hills and everywhere,*
L: Go, tell it on the mountain,
ALL: *That Jesus Christ is born!”*

***Opening Carol**

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

#135

Lighting of the Christ Candle

L: Rejoice, people of God! The light has come into the world.
(Light all four Advent candles.)
O God, now we light the candle of your nativity.
(Light the Christ candle.)
P: *With the company of heaven and with sounds of great joy, you come to us. This is the time of light and resplendent joy.*
L: The prophet Isaiah proclaimed a time when those who walked in the shadows would see a great light. A light would shine and a child would be born to us. The evangelist Luke painted the nativity sky and repeated the heavenly song of the angels, “Glory, peace on earth and goodwill!” John declared that this great light is Christ, the Word made flesh. This great light lives among us. By it, we behold God’s glory – full of grace and truth. At Christ’s nativity, we now rejoice.
ALL: *God, our Life and Light, thank you for coming to us this night. Thank you for touching all heaven and earth with your splendor. Shine with your peace in every corner of the world this night. Shine with your grace in every corner of our hearts this night. Amen.*

Call to Confession

Through confession, let us cast off the burden of dull existence. May the excitement of God’s unexpected arrival in our midst penetrate our defenses and bring us new life.

Unison Prayer of Confession

Holy God, we confess our resistance to the mystery and beauty of the Christmas story. It is easier for us to hear a sentimental tale than to experience the Savior’s coming. Yet, we are strangely moved to confess all that is wrong within and around us, hoping for the freshness of a faith newly reborn. Help us, O God, to claim our places as your chosen people, zealous for good deeds. Amen.

The Assurance of Pardon

God's grace is limitless – God's love for us, boundless. Know, in this season of joy, that our prayers are not empty words. They are the cries of broken hearts, yearning to become whole. God hears our cries, and even now, responds with the amazing gift of forgiveness. Amen.

Welcome

Promise

Jeremiah 33: 14-16 - *"I Will Fulfill the Promise I Made"*

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring forth for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'"

Isaiah 42: 1-4 - *"Behold, My Servant"*

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench. He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coast lands wait for his law.

Carol

"Joy to the World!"

#132

Luke 1: 26-38 - *"The Annunciation"*

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no husband?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Carol

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

#144

Luke 1: 39-56 - *"The Magnificat"*

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of

what was spoken to her from the Lord.” And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.” And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home.

Offering Invitation

Some gifts really are priceless, the birth of Jesus being the most precious and priceless of them all. God has given us this gift with no strings attached. Let us express our gratitude with gifts of our own. They may not be priceless, but the love that stands behind them certainly is.

Offering and Offertory

Angels We Have Heard On High

****The Doxology***

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise him all creatures here below;
Praise him above ye heaven-ly host: Praise Father Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Unison Prayer of Dedication

We seek to make your name known to the ends of the earth, O God of all our beginnings. We want the whole world to hear the good news of peace. Bless and multiply our offerings that they may bear witness to the light. Amen.

Fulfillment

Isaiah 52: 13-15 - "*Behold, My Servant Shall Prosper*"

See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Just as there were many who were astonished at him – so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals – so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

***Communion Hymn**

"What Child Is This"

#148

Holy Communion

In the Bleak Midwinter by Moya Bennan

All who seek communion with God are welcome at the table.
Please come forward to receive communion by intinction.

Matthew 1: 18-24 - "*She Will Bear a Son*"

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel (which means, God with us).” When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

Carol

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

#133

Luke 2: 1-20 - "The Birth of Christ"

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among all people with whom he is pleased!" When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had seen, as it had been told them.

Carol

"Away in a Manger"

#124

Lighting of the Candles

(Please keep your candle burning until after the Benediction)

***Carol**

"Silent Night"

#134

Commission & Benediction – John 1: 1-5**Postlude***Joy to the World* by Orla Fallon

* Those who are able, please stand

LARGE PRINT BULLETINS and HEARING AIDS are available in the narthex.