Welcome + Announcements

Prelude

Call to Worship

One: We waited.
Many: And imagined a savior.
One: We imagined power.
Many: One like the world but stronger and on our side.
One: We imagined a king on a white horse wielding a sword.
Many: We got a baby born in a stable among the livestock.
One: We imagined the work done for us through the destruction of our enemies.
Many: We receive a baby who will teach us our calling to seek reconciliation and to love expansively.
One: Praise be to God for the unexpected babe of Bethlehem.
Many: Praise to the wisdom of love.

Hymn NCH 132 “Joy to the World!”

1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
   let earth its praises bring;
   Let every heart prepare Christ room,
   and heaven and nature sing,
   and heaven and nature sing,
   and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

2 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.

3 Christ rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
The glories of God's righteousness
and wonders of God's love,
and wonders of God's love,
and wonders, wonders of God's love

Opening Reflection

When the world was dark
and the city was quiet,
you came.
You crept in beside us.

And no one knew.
Only the few who dared to believe
that God might do something different.
Will you do the same this Christmas, Lord?

Will you come into the darkness of today's world;
ot the friendly darkness
as when sleep rescues us from tiredness,
but the fearful darkness, in which people have stopped believing
that war will end
or that food will come
or that a government will change
or that the Church cares?

Will you come into that darkness
and do something different
to save your people from death and despair?

Will you come into the quietness of this town,
not the friendly quietness
as when lovers hold hands,
but the fearful silence when the phone has not rung
the letter has not come,
the friendly voice no longer speaks,
the doctor's face says it all?

Will you come into that darkness,
and do something different,
not to distract, but to embrace your people?
And will you come into the dark corners
and the quiet places of our lives?

We ask this not because we are guilt-ridden
or want to be,
but because the fullness our lives long for
depends upon us being as open and vulnerable to you
as you were to us, when you came,
wearing no more than diapers,
and trusting human hands
to hold their maker.

Will you come into our lives,
if we open them to you
and do something different?

When the world was dark
and the city was quiet
you came.
You crept in beside us.

Do the same this Christmas, Lord.
Do the same this Christmas. Amen.

Passing the Peace
The peace of Christ is with you all!
And also with you.
Sung Response

Many are the lightbeams from the one light, our one light is Jesus.
Many are the lightbeams from the one light, we are one in Christ.

Reading  Luke 2: 22-28 (NRSV)

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise
God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

For the word of God in scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God.

Meditation

Rev. Lacey Brown

Christmas Carol Sing Along

Anne Moorman-Smith, piano

Prayers of the People

You are invited to pray silently or speak out loud your prayers. End your spoken prayers with, “God in your wisdom…” The congregation will respond, “...hear our prayer.” We will close with a pastoral prayer followed by the Lord’s prayer.

Our Father/Mother, who is in heaven, Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your 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 yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Invitation to Give

- Text the amount of your donation, with one keyword, to 919-888-4541
  General – give to CUCC’s general fund
  Pledge – give toward your pledge

- You can give online at our website www.communityucc.org by simply clicking on Donate.

- Or you can always mail a check to our physical address: 814 Dixie Trail, Raleigh, NC 27607

Offertory “Good King Wenceslas” Traditional
Offering Response “Doxology” (tune and harm. from German Christmas hymn, 1539 - NCH 130)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God, all creatures here below,
Praise God for all that Love has done
Creator, Christ, and Spirit One.

Dedication to the Offering

God of great wonders,
we join with you in the joy of this season of giving,
You gave us a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
You give us life and breath,
you fill the world with beauty,
our hands with bounty,
and our hearts with the desire to give.
Accept these gifts,
and ourselves in service always,
in every season. Amen.

Hymn NCH 154 “Go Tell It on the Mountain”

Refrain:
Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hill and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born!

1 While shepherds kept their watching
o’er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light. [Refrain]

2 The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo! above the earth
Rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior’s birth. [Refrain]

3 Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born, And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. [Refrain]

Benediction

You who have seen glory, shine it into the world! You who have heard the word, speak it into the world! You who have come to the manger, bear Christ into the world! As you celebrate, may you know the fullness of grace and truth. Love has come, and will never leave us. Amen.

Postlude

Visit www.communityucc.org to explore ways to connect with our church. C U C C is here to support you throughout the week. While our physical office is closed, our virtual office is open. Please email office.cucc@gmail.com to reach our office. Please email lacey.cucc@gmail.com for pastoral care needs.

We thank all of those who created parts of today’s liturgy. Copyright and licensing notifications

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Benediction: Written by Teri Peterson, https://revgalblogpals.org/2020/12/22/worship-words-for-christmas-1

CUCC STAFF

Pastor: Lacey Brown lacey.cucc@gmail.com
Youth & Adult Education Ministry: Śānti Matthews education.cucc@gmail.com
Communications Manager: Jeff Cole office.cucc@gmail.com
Children’s Ministry: Anne Bailey Zschau children.cucc@gmail.com
Choir Director: Anne Moorman-Smith sing.cucc@gmail.com
Organist: Doug Barrick music.cucc@gmail.com

* UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
a just world for all
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