

**A SERVICE TO UNITE US IN SPIRIT
FOR DECEMBER 24, 2021
CHRISTMAS EVE**

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*Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ
2401 Atwood Avenue, Madison WI*



The Community Gathers

Lighting of the Candle

Ringling of the Bell

Welcome

Announcements

♪Prelude

Gathering Prayer

Leader: *As we continue to reflect on the call to “make room in the inn,”*

All: **On this Christmas Eve, we declare that The Inn is open for the business of compassion, with room enough for all!**

Leader: *The long-awaited Messiah is born and from him the light shines forth.*

All: **The world waits for us to shine forth with loving kindness.**

Leader: *The light—the hope, peace, joy, and love—multiplies as we share it from one illuminated heart and hand to another.*

All: **Christ is born to us anew!**

[The candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, and the Christ candle, are lit.]

Leader: *Today we offer the Lights of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love to illumine the Door of Welcome.*

All: **and we add the brightest light of all...the Light of Christ, Emmanuel.**

Leader: *It shines bright like the star that shines over Bethlehem.*

All: **may this light shine in our hearts, in our lives, and in our church.**

Leader: *May this light awaken us to our light! May it awaken us to possibilities and lead us to greater hospitality.*

All: **There IS room in this Inn, a House for the Holy!**

♪Opening Hymn: *Hope Waits for Us (verse 5)*

Love comes to us at Christmas

Love comes to heal our souls.

**Love brings an invitation
that our hearts might be made whole.**

**As we gather at the stable
in the darkness, glad and grateful
for the sacred in our midst,
for wonder and delight,
Christ is born in us this night.**

Sharing Christ's Light

Leader: *The light of Christ be with you!*

All (looking around and waving to others): *They light of Christ be with you!*

Message

Let us pray...in the spirit he taught us to pray to you, saying:

**All: Holy One, our only Home, blessed be your name,
may your day dawn, your will be done, here, as in heaven.**

Feed us today, and forgive us, as we forgive each other.

Do not forsake us at the test, but deliver us from evil.

For the glory, the power, and the mercy are yours, now and forever. Amen.

[The *Prayer of Jesus*, ©2007 Benedictine Women of Madison, Holy Wisdom Monastery, Madison, WI; used with permission]

♪Sung Prayer Response *Make of My Heart a Stable*

Make of my heart a stable, a house for the holy,

a warm and sturdy place for love to live and grow.

**Make of my life a stable, a house for they holy,
a warm and sturdy place for love to live and grow.**

**Make of our church a stable, a house for the holy,
a warm and sturdy place for love to live and grow.**

Offering

Thank you for your electronic offerings, or for mailing in your offerings for the ministry and mission of this congregation. Through your generosity, we are doing God's work in the world.

Thank you for your pledges of support for 2022, helping us plan for our ministry and mission to come.

Thank you for all you are doing to help keep all in our community safe, including getting vaccinated (if safe for you), wearing face masks, physical distancing, and hand washing.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication

Pastor: *Our offerings of time, talent, treasure, and heart*

All: **help create a space for Emmanuel to dwell.**

Pastor: *We offer the best of us*

All: **so that we make a home for love in our world.**

Pastor: *As we are moved by your love for us made known in Jesus Christ,*

All: **Help us, O God, to communicate your love in all we do and say.**

Pastor: *Help us to trust in you, Gracious One*

All: **that we may be free to share love with all creation. Amen.**

The Community Shares God's Word: The Christmas Message

Scripture: Luke 2:1-5 (They go to Bethlehem)

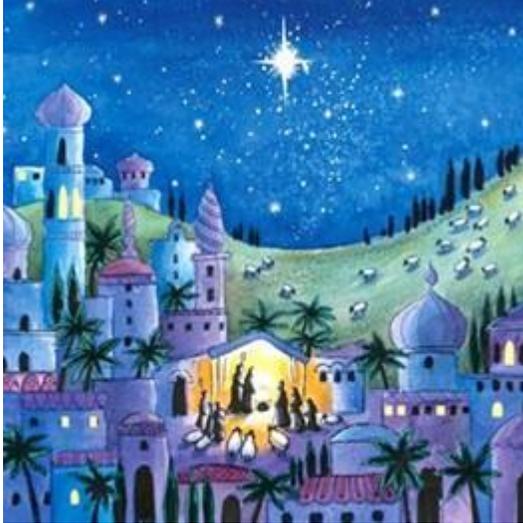
♪Response: *O Little Town of Bethlehem (#134 Pilgrim, v. 1-2)*

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.**



Scripture: Luke 2:6-7 (The Christ child is Born)

♪Response: Away in a Manger (#137)
**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.**

**The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.**



Scripture: Luke 2:8-12 (The shepherds hear the Good News)

♪Response: *The First Nowell* (#141)

**The first Nowell, the angel did say,
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Born is the King of Israel.**

**They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east, beyond them far,
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Born is the King of Israel.**



Scripture: Luke 2:13-14 (The angels sing)

♪Response: *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing* (#120)

**Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"**

**Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"**

**Hail the heaven-born Prince of peace!
Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings,
Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"**



Scripture: Luke 2:15-16 (They come to adore him)

♪Response: *What Child is This* (#140)

**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.**



Scripture: Luke 2:17-20 (Sharing the Good News)

♪ Response: *Joy to the World!* (#130)

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.**



Benediction

♪ Sending Hymn *Silent Night* (#138)

**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 the birth.**



Pastor: Rev. Leslie Schenk
Accompanist: Lyle Anderson
Ministers: All the people of Plymouth Congregational UCC

***May God's blessings be with you and yours
during this Christmas season
of hope, peace, joy, and love,
and throughout the New Year!***