

**WELCOME TO SHILOH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE  
DECEMBER 24, 2023  
3:00PM AND 7:00PM**

**MEDITATION**

*“Are you willing to stoop down and consider the needs and desires of little children; to remember the weaknesses and loneliness of people who are growing old; to stop asking how much your friends love you, and to ask yourself if you love them enough; to bear in mind the things that other people have to bear on their hearts; to trim your lamp so that it will give more light and less smoke, and to carry it in front so that your shadow will fall behind you; to make a grave for your ugly thoughts and a garden for your kindly feelings, with the gate open? Are you willing to do these things for a day? Then you are ready to keep Christmas!”*

— Henry van Dyke (1852 – 1933) American author and clergyman

**PRELUDE**

**DUET BY SANDY BAMBERGER & DANI BENTZEL**

*“Shepherd Carols”*

Smith

*“Jesus, Jesus, Rest Your Head”*

Innes

*“The Nativity”*

Sprunger

**WORDS OF WELCOME**

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP** *(Please stand if you are able)*

One: This is a night of deep mystery –

**All: a night when heaven comes to earth.**

One: This is a night of great love –

**All: a night when a child is born for us.**

One: This is a night of incredible joy –

**All: a night when angels sing to shepherds.**

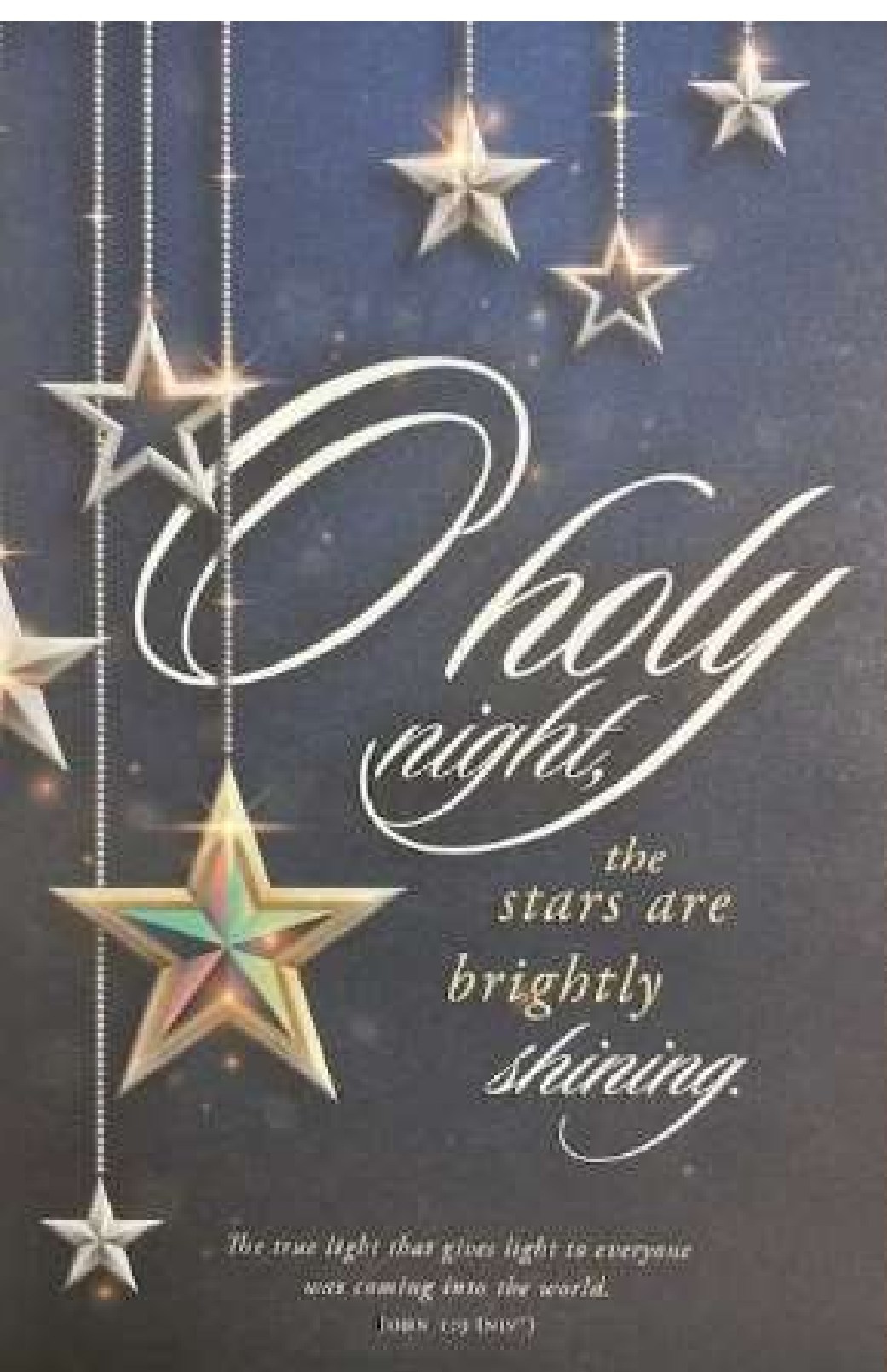
One: Glory to God in the highest! Peace to all on earth.

**All: O Come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**

**CAROL**

*“O Come, All Ye Faithful”*

#135



**\*CHRISTMAS PRAYER**

One: Let us pray!

**O wondrous God of the stars, we come tonight with breathless wonder to see the babe who will change our lives. We hear names Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, and we are awe. You have touched the earth this night with your unconditional love. Touch our hearts and minds and souls that we may never tire of this story or take it for granted. Make this night magical again. In the name of Jesus, the babe of Bethlehem, we pray. Amen.**

**PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

One: On this holy night of incarnate love, let us share signs of the peace that came down to earth to bring us joy. The peace of Christ be with you.

**All: And also with you.**

**LIGHTING THE CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLE-LIGHT OF LIGHT**

**CHOIR** *“Light of Light”*

Light of Light, shine in our hearts and renew our hope.  
**Joy to the world, Emmanuel has come.**

Light of Light, shine in our hearts and grant us peace.  
**Joy to the world, Emmanuel has come.**

Light of Light, shine in our hearts and bring us true joy.  
**Joy to the world, Emmanuel has come.**

Light of Light, shine in our hearts and fill us with love.  
**Joy to the world, Emmanuel has come.**

*Candle lighting*

Tonight, we light **all five candles** -the candles of hope, peace, joy, love, and finally, the Christ Candle, celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior. The candle of hope reminds us that in sending Christ, God sent hope to the earth. The candle of peace reminds us that peace will one day reign. The candle of joy is a reminder that we have been given eternal life and have no reason to be fearful. And the candle of love represents God’s redeeming love for us, brought to earth in the form of a tiny child.

**HYMN** *“Light of Light”* Insert

**CLOSING PRAYER**

God of light, tonight we celebrate the birth of Jesus. We thank you for this, the most precious of Christmas gifts, and we ask that you keep the hope, peace, joy and love of this season in our hearts, now and throughout the coming year. Emmanuel – God is with us, now and forevermore. Amen.

**7:00PM CHANCEL CHOIR** *“Child of Hope and Love”* Wagner

**SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS**  
*(Please remain in your seats during the caroling)*

**FIRST LESSON:** Genesis 3:8-15, 17-19  
Adam and Eve disobey God’s command and disrupt the order and goodness of creation

**CAROL** *“O Little Town of Bethlehem”* (Vs. 1 & 4) #133

**SECOND LESSON:** Genesis 22:15-18  
God promises that, through Abraham, all the peoples of the world will be blessed

**CAROL** *“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”* (Vs. 1) #116

**THIRD LESSON:** Isaiah 9:2, 6-7  
The people who walk in darkness receive the promise of the Messiah

**CAROL** *“It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”* (Vs. 1 & 4) #131

**FOURTH LESSON:** Isaiah 11:1-4a, 6-9  
The Messiah will come from the root of Jesse to restore the peace of creation

**CAROL** *“Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”* #127

**FIFTH LESSON:** Luke 1:26-35, 38  
An angel appears to Mary and announces that she will bear a holy child

**CAROL** *“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”* (Vs. 1 & 3) #144

**SIXTH LESSON:** Luke 2:1-7  
Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem, where Mary gives birth to her child

CAROL "Away in a Manger" #124

SEVENTH LESSON: Luke 2:8-16  
Angels appear to shepherds in the fields  
and announce the birth of the Messiah

3:00PM SPECIAL MUSIC "O Come, Be Born Again" Martin

7:00PM HANDBELL CHOIR "Ring We Now of Christmas" Arr. McKlveen

CHRISTMAS MEDITATION "The Best Gift Ever"

PASTORAL PRAYER

PRESENTING OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS BEFORE GOD

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Come now and kneel before the Christ Child. Bring all that you are and all that you have. Offer gifts in wonder and surprise, awe and reverence. Offer your gifts in joy and delight. In the spirit of this night, let us receive our Christmas offering.

\*OFFERTORY RESPONSE "Doxology"

To God, all glorious heavenly light,  
To Christ, revealed in earthly night,  
To God the Spirit, now we raise  
Our joyful songs of thankful praise. Amen.

\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Loving God, there are so many things to be thankful for tonight. Receive these tokens of our gratitude for your love incarnate in the babe of Bethlehem. May they become God-with-us for all the world. May they breathe magic back into a world that needs a sense of wonder and joy. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

SHARING THE CHRISTMAS LIGHT

SENTENCES BEFORE DISTRIBUTION OF CHRIST'S LIGHT

The God who said "Let there be light," has caused light to shine in our hearts. That light is the glory of God reflected in the face of Jesus Christ. As our candles are a sea of light lit from the one light of Christ, so may the church reflect Christ's light and love in the world. Amen.

LIGHT FROM FIRST CANDLE

*Pastor Melinda will light her candle from the Christ Candle. The ushers will light their candles from Pastor Melinda's candle. They will take their candles and light the candle of each person on an aisle seat, and they in turn, will light the candle of the person next to them. When all the candles are lit, the people will hold their lit candles and sing "Silent Night."*

\*CAROL "Silent 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, Shepherds quake at the sight,  
Glories stream from heaven afar,  
Heavenly host 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.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

One: Let us say together the Lord's Prayer!  
**All: 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.**

\*CLOSING HYMN "Joy to the World!" #132

\*BENEDICTION

One: Tonight, as we celebrate "God is with us" in the birth of Jesus, let us continue to live lives of hope, peace, joy, and love. Share God's love with the shepherds you meet on the hillside. Let the Holy Spirit fill your heart with glad tidings like the angels. And may the Prince of Peace, born again tonight, live in your heart to comfort and challenge you as you seek to live as one of his disciples.  
**All: Amen.**

**WE ARE DELIGHTED THAT YOU JOINED US FOR WORSHIP TODAY! WE WISH YOU A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS! MAY THE CHRIST CHILD BRING YOU THE REIGN OF PEACE!**

- **THE ALTAR FLOWERS** are presented to the glory of God and in loving memory of Nancy and LeRoy Leber by Melinda, Leon and their families.
- **THE BULLETINS** are dedicated to the glory of God and thanks to all of the volunteer members of the Music Department by Bob and Stephanie Limbert.
- **LITURGISTS: 3:00PM:** Jim Bentzel, **7:00PM:** Patti Goodyear
- **GREETERS 3:00PM:** Steve & Sue Besecker **7:00PM:** Consistory
- **NURSERY DUTY: 3:00PM:** Jessie Sechriest, **7:00PM** Volunteer
- **MUSIC:** Sandy Bamberger, Dani Bentzel, Handbell, and Chancel Choirs.

**THANK YOU TO ALL OF THE VOLUNTEERS AND MUSICIANS FOR PROVIDING THE WORSHIP MUSIC!**

This year’s special **Christmas Offering** will be designated to the ELC Bibles (first \$600) and the balance will go toward the kitchen fund.



Thanks goes to everyone who purchased poinsettias. They make the sanctuary especially beautiful! Poinsettias can be claimed **after the 7:00 service on Christmas Eve.**

**Annual Reports** for all organizations and committees of the church and Sunday School are due in the church office by **Sunday, December 31 2023.**



*“No matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here at Shiloh UCC, where God is still speaking”*

**THE CHURCH STAFF**

Pastor	Rev. Melinda LaMontagne, PhD
Director of Music	Stephanie Limbert
Organist	Sandra Bamberger
Missionaries in Costa Rica	Sally Jane and Crosby Johnson
Early Learning Center Director	Allison Hartnett
Administrative Assistant	Maira Rivera
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