

## IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Organist: Karen Cain  
January 3, 2021

Pastor: Rev. Dana Schindler  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Christmas

“Extending God’s love with the work of our hands and hearts...”

### WELCOME

Happy New Year!

Welcome to worship on this second Sunday after Christmas. We are pleased that you have chosen to worship with us today. No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here!

Please leave a comment to let us know you are here. Also note any joys and concerns you may have and feel free to greet each other in Christian love.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Worship is a gift to God that transforms our spirits. In that spirit of transformation, we are called to bring God gifts of our time, talent, and treasure. Offerings may be mailed to Immanuel UCC at 5838 Staunton Road, Edwardsville, IL. 62025. Please help us to continue to meet our financial responsibilities and continue our ministries. Please remember that we will also be receiving offerings for our Christmas Fund offering. This special offering helps retired ministers who are having financial difficulty as well as those who have lost employment due to the pandemic. Please give generously.

Music used is covered under our CCLI livestreaming license # 4012842.

Today for our service, you will need your worship guide, a candle, and communion elements.

CONFIRMATION meets at 10:30 today.

CHURCH COUNCIL meets January 6<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom.

THE BREAD OF LIFE FOOD PANTRY in Hamel is open on Mondays from 9:00am till 10:30am. All who need assistance are welcome.

### FOOD PANTRY NEEDS

Canned Fruits  
Syrup  
Flour

Coffee  
Mustard  
Ketchup

Pancake mix  
Sugar  
BBQ Sauce

Cooking Oil  
Hamburger helper  
Salad Dressing

Tuna  
Cake Mix  
Toilet paper

Baked beans  
Mashed Potatoes  
Empty egg cartons

**COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL OUTREACH** We now have a texting system we can use to quickly communicate with the congregation event reminders, cancellations, and other matters. It can also be used in conjunction with our Facebook page and our website. Please sign up by texting “Connect” (without the quotation marks” to 618-268-1394. You will receive a reply and a link to a form to complete. Please add this number to your contact list as the church so you will know who is texting you. After you sign up, watch for Wednesday check in texts. The texts will ask you to select **A** (I’m OK) or **B** (I’m not doing well). If you reply **B** I will call or text to check in on you.

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

to learn how to do Facebook livestreaming—see Dave S  
to be part of the Vision Team—see Joyce or Lynn  
to help with youth activities—see Barb  
to help with FaithQuest—see Andrea or Jamie  
to administer the website—see Dave S.

### **NEW E-MAIL ADDRESSES**

Ruth: [officeiucc@gomadison.com](mailto:officeiucc@gomadison.com)  
Pastor Dana: [pastoriucc@gomadison.com](mailto:pastoriucc@gomadison.com)

### **BIRTHDAYS**

1--Barb B.	11--Matthew B.
1--Allen R.	13--Madelyn G.
3--Glen LeDuc	26--Jessica D.
7--Mary Ann C.	28--Alvin W.

### **CONCERNS**

Maria S.	Harry S	Lillie H
Kathie R	Hope S.	Carole G.
Tomiko J.	Wayne S.	Dave K.
Rose O.	Roxanne	Kathleen L.
Michelle L.	Kristy K.	Dorothy D.
Jane B.	Mary Ann C.	Caroline’s Family
Jake	Diane B.	Klenke Family

Students/School Personnel  
 Hitz Home workers and residents  
 Our country as we deal with pandemic  
 Pastor Dana, as she leads

## **PRELUDE**

*Karen Cain*

### **POINT TO PONDER**

Love is the ultimate gift that one can give and receive.--Anonymous  
 If you love someone, the greatest gift you can give them is your presence.  
 --Thich Nhat Hanh

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

**Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Isaiah 60:1-3**

### **PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

Holy One, we come this day, eager for a new beginning. We pray that you will erase our past mistakes and let us begin anew, with joyful hearts. Open our hearts and minds as we praise your holy name. Amen.

### **OPENING HYMN**

**Joy to the World #132 NCH**  
**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 World, the Savior reigns!**  
**Let men 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.**

### **FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART**

I hope each of you had a wonderful Christmas!

One of the customs we have at Christmas is giving gifts. I'm sure you got some gifts. Maybe you can post a gift you received on Facebook. One gift I got was house slippers. They are nice and warm and I really needed them because the old ones were falling apart.

We're going to hear the song We Three Kings in just a moment. They brought gifts to Jesus after his birth. Since they had to follow the star and do some research on where the star was, Jesus might have already been about two before they found him. The gifts they brought were gold, frankincense and myrrh. We might think these are kind of weird gifts for a baby, but remember, Jesus was also a king, so they weren't considered weird then.

His family might have needed the gold when they had to go to Egypt instead of going back home. Frankincense and myrrh were expensive perfumes often used when people were buried.

We also know that Jesus was an important baby who should receive special gifts, but the gifts Jesus has asked us for is to love God and to love each other. So, in the coming year, let's work on loving God and all of the people we meet.

Prayer: Gracious God, We give thanks for the gift of Jesus and his love for us. Help us to love you and each other as our gift to you. Amen.

### **GOSPEL READING** Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
 are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
 for from you shall come a ruler  
 who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

## **HYMN**

**We Three Kings**  
**We three kings of Orient are;**  
**Bearing gifts we traverse afar,**  
**Field and fountain, moor and mountain,**

Following yonder star.  
***Refrain:*** O star of wonder, star of light,  
 Star with royal beauty bright,  
 Westward leading, still proceeding,  
 Guide us to thy perfect light.

Born a king on Bethlehem's plain,  
 Gold I bring to crown him again,  
 King forever, ceasing never,  
 Over us all to reign.

***Refrain***

Frankincense to offer have I;  
 Incense owns a deity nigh;  
 Prayer and praising, voices raising,  
 Worshiping God on high.

***Refrain***

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume  
 Breathes a life of gathering gloom  
 Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying  
 Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

***Refrain***

Glorious now behold him arise;  
 King and God and sacrifice:  
 Alleluia, Alleluia,  
 Sound through the earth and skies.

***Refrain***

## **SERMON**

*Rev. Dana Schindler*

Imagine. Three pagan men, so the story goes, see a star—a bright star that doesn't move through the sky, but stays put for an extended time. This is unusual. If you pay attention to the stars and planets in the sky, you know that most of them move in relation to the earth's rotation. These men might have guessed that the earth or the stars and planets moved but it would not be scientifically proven for centuries. But they did know that this was not your typical star.

And so they did some research.

They came to the conclusion that the star was somewhere close to Jerusalem and traveled in that direction. They stopped to talk to Herod, the king, to determine specifically where they should look for this “new king.” They seemed to have assumed that Herod would know about this and be pleased, but they were wrong on both counts. Herod did call the priests who would know the scriptures and be able to tell him where the messiah was to be born. He shared the information with the Wise Men and asked that they come back and tell him where the baby was so that he too could go to worship him.

It doesn't seem that the Wise Men understood Herod's real purpose until after they arrived in Bethlehem and had a dream that told them to go home by a different route.

Herod was a king who loved his power and the last thing he wanted was another king, especially one sent by God to the Jews, to come take over his power. He didn't care that Jesus was just an infant. There had been child kings before. He wasn't giving up his power for anyone.

When the Wise Men did not return in a timely manner, he figured out they weren't coming at all. So he told his army to go to Bethlehem and the surrounding area and kill every male child under the age of two, just to make sure.

And so all of the male children were killed. Since parents would certainly not just allow the soldiers to kill their children, many of them likely died as well. Herod was so afraid of this child, that he committed genocide upon the people. Imagine the wailing and grief of parents and families that survived. Rachel who wept for her children, was not a specific woman, but a typical woman, who could not be consoled. Many families may have lost more than one child during this time.

Imagine.

Imagine this loss of lives of innocent people.

Imagine how many who lived not only felt sorrow of grief but guilt of survival.

Imagine the desire of power that led to such a horrendous order to kill. Imagine 'leading' people who know how easy it is to disregard their lives.

Imagine the fear, the depression, the anger, the hatred.

Imagine Joseph who also had a dream, a dream that led him to escape with his wife and child to Egypt. Egypt was not a place Jews would be excited to go to. There would certainly be memories of Pharaoh, slavery, and plagues. But God told Joseph it would be safe for them and Joseph trusted.

Thankfully, Egypt accepted them and they lived there without problem until Herod died and they could return to Nazareth.

This scripture makes several points for us to consider.

One can believe even before one can understand. The Wise Men believed that this child was special even though they didn't understand the faith he came from.

One can love and protect people they don't know, simply because it's the right thing to do.

One can hear God speaking if they listen.

Power and greed can lead to terrible behavior when not controlled. To hold power well, one needs to understand that the power must be shared. Other voices need to be heard in order to make wise decisions. Greed of power never ends well for anyone.

Terrible things can happen to innocent people. And when they do, God is right there with us, helping us to get through it, even if it takes a long time. God uses our bad experiences to make us stronger and to teach us how to work together for good.

Evil does not get the last word. Love wins. Always. Let us remember that we are commanded to love God and each other.

Love is the best gift of all.

### **PASTORAL PRAYER**

Loving God, we give thanks for the many blessings you have provided, family, friends, church, and homes. We also give thanks for special days like birthdays. We pray that you will make us truly thankful.

We offer special prayers for those who are ill, for those who grieve, and for those who suffer loss. We pray that you will comfort each one and provide the healing they need. We pray for those who do not have what they need to survive and thrive and ask that you will help us meet the needs we can. We pray for our leaders, that they will make wise decisions and will help us to heal our divisions. And we pray for ourselves, that we may love you and each other, so that we may also help to heal the divisions in our homes, our communities, our country, and our world. Open our hearts and minds that we may truly see and love one another without condition. All these things we pray in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed by 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into

temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, the glory forever Amen.

### **GIVING OUR GIFTS**

Like the Wise Men all those years ago, we worship the Christ-child with our gifts—gifts of time, talent, and treasure. Each gift we give is but a portion of what our awesome God has given us; gifts undeserved, but given in love. Let us give with joy.

### **DOXOLOGY**

**We Give You but Your Own      # 785 NCH**  
**We give you but your own,**  
**whate'er the gift may be;**  
**All that we have is yours alone,**  
**we give it gratefully.**

### **HOLY COMMUNION**

Luke, the evangelist, wrote of our risen Savior, who at the table with two of the disciples took bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened, and they recognized the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread.

**In company with all believers in every time and beyond time, we come to this table to know the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread.**

### **COMMUNION PRAYER**

God be with us as we lift our hearts to God. Let our praises to God sing out. Eternal God, who has created the heavens and the earth, giving breath to every living thing, we thank you for all the gifts of creation and for the gift of life itself. We thank you for making us in your own image, for forgiving us when we act as though you have no claim on us, and for keeping us in your steadfast care. We rejoice in Jesus Christ, the only one eternally begotten by you, who was born of your servant Mary and shared the joys and sorrows of life as we know it. We remember Christ's death, we celebrate Christ's resurrection, and, in the beloved community of your church, we await Christ's return at the end of history. We take courage from the abiding presence of your Holy Spirit in our midst. We offer you our praise for people of faith in every age who stand as witnesses to your love and justice. With all the prophets, martyrs, and saints, and all the company of heaven, we glorify you:

**Holy, holy, holy God of love and majesty, the whole universe speaks of your glory, O God Most High. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God! Hosanna in the highest!**

We remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, Jesus took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples, saying: "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, Jesus also took the cup, after supper, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." By eating this bread and drinking this cup, we proclaim Christ's death, celebrate Christ's resurrection, and await Christ's coming again.

**Amen. Come, Christ Jesus!**

Gracious God, we ask you to bless this bread and cup and all of us with the outpouring of your Holy Spirit. Through this meal, make us the body of Christ, the church, your servant people, that we may be salt, and light, and leaven for the furtherance of your will in all the world. **Amen.**

### **BREAKING BREAD AND POURING WINE** **SHARING THE ELEMENTS**

#### **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

**Eternal God, you have called your people from east and west and north and south to feast at the table of Jesus Christ. We thank you for Christ's presence and for the spiritual food of Christ's body and blood. By the power of your Holy Spirit, keep us faithful to your will. Go with us to the streets, to our homes, and to our places of labor and leisure that whether we are gathered or scattered, we may be the servant church of the servant Christ, in whose name we rejoice to pray. Amen.**

#### **HYMN**

**"Go Tell It On the Mountain"**

**NCH #154**

**Refrain:**

**Go tell it on the mountain,  
over the hill and everywhere.**

**Go tell it on the mountain  
that Jesus Christ is born!**

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

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

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

### **BENEDICTION**

As followers of Christ, we are called to tell others about God's love demonstrated by the most perfect gift of all. Let us tell and show that love to everyone we meet!

And now, until we meet again, may each one be held safely in the palm of God's hand.

### **POSTLUDE**