

Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ

Christmas Eve Worship



*Lessons & Carols
5:30 PM Service
Merry Christmas & Welcome!*

Welcome

The Ringing of the Bell

Prelude

***Carol “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”** New Century Hymnal #116, vss. 1,2

O come, O come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Child of God appears.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

O come, O Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show, and help us in that way to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

The First Lesson is from John’s Prologue (Sue Lanchantin)

In the beginning – everything began! And before everything began, there was God. God was before – before everything. The Holy Spirit and Christ were there, too. Jesus brought Christ into this world in a very special way that changed everything. Everything. The Light that Jesus brought into the world reminds us that this Light is always with us – in us! Yes, we are “People of the Light; People of the Love and the Hope and the Joy and the Peace”. So, we begin this evening with lighting a symbol of that Light, Love, Hope, Peace, and Joy for all to see: the Christ Candle at the Center of our Advent Wreath.

Lighting of the Christ Candle

***Carol “One Candle is Lit”**

Come, listen, the sounds of God with us ring clear,
And signs of a cross in the distance appear.
The Word once made flesh, yet the Word ever near.
One candle is lit for the Christ birthday here.

Second Lesson recalls John the Baptist's words **(Abigail Langlan)**

Listen to the call of John the Baptist's voice in your heart:

"I am the voice shouting in the desert:
Get the road ready for the One to come;
make the path straight and clear for this One to travel!
Every valley must be filled up and leveled out,
even-out the hills and the mountains!
Nothing can be in the way! No winding roads, no rough paths.
Make it easy for everyone to see the coming of the One.
The One who will reveal God to this world,
a world sorely in need of God!"

Imagine John the Baptist saying these things to those he baptized in the Jordan River that day, adding:

"And, while I baptize you with water at this river's bank, the One to come will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, bringing Love, Hope, Joy and Peace for this world. Be ready!
The time is come..."

***Carol "Come, O Long-expected Jesus"** New Century Hymnal #122, vss. 1,2

Come, O long-expected Jesus,
born to set all people free;
from our fears and sins release us;
grant us your true liberty.

Israel's strength and consolation,
hope to all the earth impart;
dear desire of every nation,
enter every longing heart.

Third Lesson - The Angel appears to Mary **(Laura Langlan)**

Now, even though it seems like yesterday, this happened in the town of Nazareth in a place called Galilee more than two thousand years ago.

A Messenger of God, the Archangel Gabriel appeared suddenly to a young woman named Mary. Mary was engaged to Joseph, a man whose family dated back to the time of David, a famous and important ruler of Judea.

The appearance of the angel startled Mary, as it would anyone! The angel's words were even more startling: "God is with you, Mary, and you are the most fortunate of all women!"

Mary was frightened and wondered what this all meant. And the angel surprised her even more by saying, "God has chosen you, Mary, to be the mother of a child, a son, whom you will name Jesus."

Trying hard to understand all that was happening but not quite able to believe it, Mary told the angel that this was simply not possible. Then the angel said the words that would be repeated until time ceases to be, "Mary, everything is possible with God."

And Mary was changed in a way she could hardly understand; suddenly, fear was no longer with her; she bowed in respect to the messenger and said, "I will follow God's will; I place my life in God's care." And when she looked up – no one was there. The angel—had gone. And God, as before, was with her.

***Carol Mary, Woman of the Promise** New Century Hymnal #123, vss. 1, 2, 3, 5

Mary, woman of the promise;
vessel of your people's dreams:
through your open, willing spirit
waters of God's good news streamed.

Mary, morning star of justice;
mirror of the Radiant Light:
in the shadows of life's journey,
be a beacon for our sight.

Mary song of holy wisdom
sung before the world began:
faithful to the Word within you,
as you bore God's wondrous plan.

Mary, woman of the gospel;
humble home for treasured seed:
help us to be true disciples,
bearing fruit in word and deed.

***Fourth Lesson tells of the night when Jesus is born* (Ramsaywak Family)**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered so taxes and more could be collected. He wanted to know how many people were on Earth, what their names were, where they lived, how many children they had and so forth. His decree required that everyone travel to the towns where their families were from and register in the census he demanded.

Obedying the law of the emperor, Joseph took Mary to Bethlehem, because that is where his descendants had originally settled. How far was it to Bethlehem? From Nazareth it was a long and hard trip - about 120 miles, and they traveled by donkey and on foot with others who were on the same journey.

At that time, Mary was engaged to Joseph and expecting a child. She was very pregnant and close to having her baby. While they were in Bethlehem, Mary's time arrived, and she gave birth to Jesus. It was there, in Bethlehem, that the child was wrapped in cloth and born in a manger where animals and their keepers stayed, because as we are told - there was no room in the inn.

Solo

“O Holy Night”

Sylvia Ramsaywak

Fifth Lesson - Angels appear to the shepherds

(Jeff Newcombe)

While all this was happening, some distance away - other angels, other messengers of God suddenly appeared before a group of shepherds. We are told that the glory of God shined so brightly in them that the shepherds were terrified! They didn't know what to do...

But the messengers calmed them, saying:

“Do not be afraid; Listen! We bring you good news of great joy for everyone! To you, to this nation and to all the world – on this day in the city of David - a child is born. A child of God; the one you have been waiting for – the Messiah.” [The one who will become known as Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-Us.]

Then the angels told them, “This is how you will be able to find him: the infant will be in a manger wrapped in cloth. You will know this child when you see him!”

It was all so amazing! Suddenly, as if the heavens and nature and stars could sing, these words were heard echoing, *resounding* all around them:

“Glory to God in the highest and peace to all on earth,
for the child is born.”

Then, the angels departed as mysteriously as they had come. The shepherds looked at each other shocked and in wonder. All at once they said together, “Let's go, *now!* Let's go and see this for ourselves!” And, so, they went, and just as they had been told, they found Mary and Joseph and Jesus, and they were in awe of all that had transpired and what they saw.

***Carol** **“O Little Child”** from Emmanuel

O little Child,
I bring a rose to the Rose of Sharon;
Lilies to the Lily of the Valley,
Stars to the Morning Star,
Peace to the Prince of Peace.

I bring you Roses,
I bring you Lilies from the garden,
Stars from Heaven to the Prince of Peace, Roses,
I bring you Lilies from the garden,
I bring your Stars, But you give me Peace.

Sixth Lesson - The Wise Travelers and the Star **(Matthew Lypen)**

News of the birth of the child, the appearance of messengers and the strange star spread quickly. Travelers from everywhere were talking all about it. Word of the birth of Jesus, *a newborn ruler*, even got to King Herod - the cruel and jealous ruler of the time.

At one point, the Wise Travelers passed through Herod's court, asking for directions to find this child. They had been following the star and wondered if anyone knew where it led.

Well, Herod and much of Jerusalem were already frightened by all these strange occurrences being reported. King Herod called together his high priests and the scribes and asked them what they thought was going on. "Could this be the Messiah?" he asked.

The high priests and scribes told Herod that according to scriptures and the prophets, the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem – in the direction of the star. That was enough for Herod. He was going to end this threat to him and his power as soon as he could.

Making believe that he wanted to celebrate the birth of this amazing child, Herod called the Wise Travelers to him and asked them to tell him when they found the child so he, too, could go and worship him. They agreed to do this and went on their way, following the star until it stopped over the place where the child was - and there they found Jesus.

Upon finding the baby Jesus, they were overcome with joy. They embraced the family and presented them with the gifts they had brought. They were in awe and amazement the whole time.

***Carol** **O Come All Ye Faithful** New Century Hymnal #135, vss. 1, 3

O Come, all ye faithful, joyful,
and triumphant
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him,
born the King of angels;
O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing all ye messengers of heavenly love:
Glory to God, all glory in the highest:
O come in adoration,
O come in adoration,
O come in Adoration, Christ the Lord.

The shepherds and the Wise Travelers joined with others that night. They shared their stories with Jesus' family. Everyone who was part of that night and the days that followed were changed forever.

Finally, it was time for them to go. The shepherds went back to their fields, singing praises and thanks to God for what they had witnessed.

The Wise Travelers, too, began their journey home. But not by way of Herod. They had been warned in a dream that the king was using them to get to Jesus to kill him. The angels directed them to travel home by a different route; so they did. They made their way home leaving King Herod angry at being out maneuvered.

There was another dream, too. This one for Joseph. An angel told Joseph not to go back to Nazareth, because King Herod would surely know of his arrival and attempt to kill Jesus there. Instead, the angel told Joseph to take his family to Egypt where they would be safe. They were to wait there until the angel returned, telling them it was all clear to return to Nazareth.

And so it was that Joseph and Mary and Jesus and their young family stayed in Egypt until Herod had died and the angel told them it was time to return home.

All this and more was held in the hearts of everyone; it was all remembered, especially the voices that sung that night in the heavens and have continued to this day to sing in all our hearts.

***Carol "Angels We Have Heard on High"** New Century Hymnal #125, vss. 1, 4

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains.
And the mountains in reply, echo back their joyous strains.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

See the babe in manger laid whom the choir of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while our hearts in love we raise.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Passing of the Peace of Christ **(Sue Lanchantin)**

As we gather together, remembering the night that changed the course of the universe, the "cosmic event of Jesus", let us offer one another a sign of peace that connects us now and forever to the Good News we share for all. May the peace of the Risen Christ be with you all!

And also with you!

Instructions for the Lighting of the Candles, while we sing...

Carol **"Joy to the World!"** New Century Hymnal #132, vss. 1, 2

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 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!

Benediction**(Matthew Lypen)**

Let's go from this place proclaiming
that we have seen the glory of God in our own ways,
believing that God's Light shines in the darkness:
this Light of Jesus, shines and will never be overcome by darkness.

And as we go, we pray in this way:
May the love of God in and around us,
the joy of the Spirit that causes the heavens to sing,
and the peace of Christ born this day many years ago...
be with us all this Christmas Day
and every day of our lives. Shalom.

***Carol "Silent Night, Holy Night" NCH 134, Verses 1,2, 3**

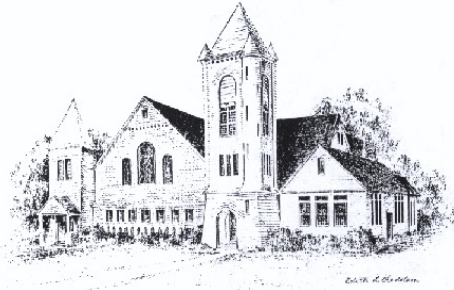
Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright.
Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

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, Child of God's, love's pure light,
radiant beams from thy holy face bring the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus Lord at thy birth, Jesus Lord at thy birth.

Church Bell Rings

*The service is ended. Go in Peace.
Merry Christmas!*



Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ

For more than a century and a half, Sayville's Congregational Church has served families on the South Shore of Long Island and has been a voice for the progressive Protestant tradition. A member of the United Church of Christ since it was established in 1957, today we continue to celebrate God's love, to advocate and act for the oppressed, and to welcome all those on their spiritual journey, from wherever they may come. Thank you for joining us. Please contact us at any time for more information about our congregation or with any questions you may have for us. Merry Christmas.

Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ

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Tonight's Service is being live-streamed on our church channel at
www.echimestv.org Tune in any time!

Thank you for being with us today.

Peace. Shalom. Salaam. For the ways of peace are many.

"Namaste"