



*Fourth Sunday of Advent
Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ
December 24, 2023*

*Whose laughter invites us, whose earth upholds us,
whose stars we wish upon,
whose symphony for birdsong awakens, oh awakens, us,
candle to a blinding sun.*

from "By a Mighty and Shining Grace"
by Joseph H. Gilmore

Ringling of the Bell

Prelude “In Trutina” from *Carmina Burana* by Carl Orff

Call to Worship & Lighting of the Candle

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent. In a moment, we will light the fourth candle on our Advent wreath: the candle of Love.

In the time before the birth of Jesus, the Israelites had little peace, hope, joy or love for the future of their nation or their people, except for the power of God that remained strong in their lives, even as they wavered from time-to-time.

Still, they persevered and waited for the “One who would answer their cries of “Hosanna!”: a messiah, an anointed leader, like David who would help them. They believed when that happened, all would be well – again.

Today we continue our 2023 Advent journey, anticipating the birth of Jesus, the one who is called the Light of the World and whose Love is an expression of all Creation...

As we light this candle of Love, we give thanks for all those we love – love is love. Always.

(The candles are lit...)

Please rise if you wish and join us in singing.

"One Candle is Lit" Verse 1 for Hope; Verse 2 for Peace;
Verse 3 for Joy; Verse 4 for Love

Come surely, Sweet Jesus, as dawn follows night,
Our hearts long to greet you, as roses the light.
Salvation, draw near us, our visions engage.
One candle is lit for the hope of the day.

Come quickly, shalom, teach us how to prepare
for a gift that compels us with justice to care.
Our spirits are restless till sin and war cease.
One candle is lit for the reign of God's peace.

Come festively sing while awaiting the birth,
join angels in dancing from heaven to earth.
Wave banners of good news, lift high thankful praise
One candle is lit for the joy of these days.

Come, wanderer where lion and lamb gently play,
where evil is banished and faith takes the day,
a babe in a manger to fool the world's eyes.
One candle is lit for God's loving surprise.

Please be seated.

A Voice Responds

*These fires atop towers of wax,
symbolize the ever-present Light of the World,
the One we await, born to us long ago,
in a manger far away and (now) as close
as the hearts here and afar
that beat together, within us all.*

Chancel Choir "Mary, Did You Know?"
by Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene, Arranged by Jack Schrader

Please remain seated and join together in praying our Unison Prayer.

Unison Prayer

Creator God, Child, Spirit. Love.

Born to love us back to you
with passion and compassion:
restoring our lives,
binding up our broken hearts,
setting us free to love and be loved.

Love in your name,
Emmanuel: God with us.

Come, love and live
with the presence of this gracious God.

Creator God, Child, Spirit. Love.

Please rise if you wish.

Passing of Christ's Peace

We know God is with us; we hold the greatest of commandments to love and embrace peace as a practice, a way of life. And, with the greeting of the one who promises "peace" beyond all understanding, from our minds, our hearts and our souls we say:

"May the peace of the Risen Christ be with you!" And also with you.

Friends, let us offer one another a sign of peace.

Please remains as you are and join us in singing

Hymn “There’s A Spirit of Love in This Place”

Sing! Prayer and Praise #33

There's a spirit of love in this place,
There's a spirit of love in this place,
You can't see it but it's there,
just as precious as the air.
There's a spirit of love in this place,

There's the presence of peace in this room,
There's the presence of peace in this room,
In God's tenderness is found
peace that passes human bounds.
There's the presence of peace in this room.

O alleluia, sing alleluia!
We bless your holy name.
O alleluia, sing alleluia!
There's a spirit of love in this place.

Please be seated.

Joys and Concerns

Please respond, "God, hear our prayers."

Pastoral Prayer

Assurance of God's Love

The Prayer of Jesus – From the New Zealand Book of Prayer

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,

Source of all that is and that shall be,

Creator God of us all, Loving God, in who is all about us:

The blessings of your name echo through the universe!

The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!

Your will be done by all created beings!

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom

sustain our hope and come upon us.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

In times of temptation and testing, strengthen us.

From trials too great to endure, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

Please remain seated.

First Gospel Reading from the Luke 1:26-38 The Inclusive Bible

²⁶ Six months later, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a young woman named Mary; she was engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. ²⁸ Upon arriving, the angel said to Mary, “Rejoice, highly favored one! God is with you! Blessed are you among women!”

²⁹ Mary was deeply troubled by these words and wondered what the angel’s greeting meant. ³⁰ The angel went on to say to her, “Don’t be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. ³¹ You’ll conceive and bear a son, and give him the name Jesus—‘Deliverance.’ ³² His dignity will be great, and he will be called the Only Begotten of God. God will give Jesus the judgment seat of David, his ancestor, ³³ to rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his reign will never end.”

³⁴ Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have never been with a man?”

³⁵ The angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you—hence the offspring to be born will be called the Holy One of God. ³⁶ Know too that Elizabeth, your kinswoman, has conceived a child in her old age; she who was thought to be infertile is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ Nothing is impossible with God.”

³⁸ Mary said, “I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say.”
With that, the angel left her.

The Chancel Choir

"Dear Little Child of Ours" from *Emmanuel*
by Dorothy Davidson Hauske

Second Gospel Reading

Luke 1:46b-55

from The Inclusive Bible

^{46b} “My soul proclaims your greatness, O God,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in you, my Savior.
⁴⁸ For you have looked with favor
upon your lowly servant,
and from this day forward
all generations will call me blessed.
⁴⁹ For you, the Almighty, have done great things for me,
and holy is your Name.
⁵⁰ Your mercy reaches from age to age
for those who fear you.
⁵¹ You have shown strength with your arm;
you have scattered the proud in their conceit;
⁵² you have deposed the mighty from their thrones
and raised the lowly to high places.
⁵³ You have filled the hungry with good things,
while you have sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ You have come to the aid of Israel your servant,
mindful of your mercy—
⁵⁵ the promise you made to our ancestors—
to Sarah and Abraham
and their descendants forever.”

Homily

Hymn “Mary, Woman of the Promise” New Century Hymnal #123

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

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

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

Mary, model of compassion; and wounded by your offspring pain:
When our hearts are torn by sorrow, teach us how to love again.

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

Benediction

Church Covenant

In response to God’s love,
we covenant with each other...
to be faithful to the demands
and inspiration of the eternal spirit,
revealed in the event of Jesus Christ;
to accept and respect each other
with love and concern
in our worship and witness;
to reach out with the courage
of our convictions
in the cause of justice,
liberation, and equality for all.
In this, we covenant to keep the
ultimate promise: “I care, I am with you.

Please be seated.

Choral Blessing "Baby Jesu, At Your Birth" (first verse)
Words and Music by James Ahrend

Ringling of the Bell

Postlude "Skating" by Vince Guaraldi

2023 CHANCEL POINSETTIAS

DONATED BY:

Tom and Kay Wolf

Karen E. Gunkel-Lewis and
Kristine Houghtalen

Carl and Tina MacGowan

Jesse Y. Ramos and Randolph Pearson

Bob and Gail Ackers

Karen and Hank Maust

Sue Lanchantin

Kathy and Peter Leis

Connie and Roger Kauffman

Jean and Jeff Newcombe

Marjorie Taylor-Thomas

DONATED BY:

Kathy and Peter Leis

Bob and Gail Ackers

Connie and Roger Kauffman

Karen and Hank Maust

Jerry and Susan Ryan

Roberta Moger

Hilda Baeza

DONATED BY:

Jerry and Susan Ryan

Mike and Judie Jayne

IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

Our Beloved Riley

Our parents Martin and Marion Gunkel
and our brother Kurt Gunkel

Gordan MacGowan
Frank and Florence Polokowski

Aunt Mela and Nita Pippins

Bob Pierce

Rev. John A. Geter, Jr. and Rev. Robert Pierce

Paul and my son Pete

Herminie and Mike Bavosa
Shirley and James McMann

Phil and Loved Ones

Papa, Nana, Edie, Grampy and Aunt Chick

Carolyn Kane

IN HONOR OF:

Abigail and Olivia Linsner

Ray

Katie, Ray and Our dear families

Rev. Ray Bagnuolo

James Ryan, the newest member of the
Ryan Clan

The Pastoral Care of Ray Bagnuolo

Hilda Torres Garcia and Loved Ones

SPECIAL INTENTIONS:

In Celebration of all Families

Praying for Peace



Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ

For more nearly 175 years, 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, celebrate God's love, however you may know God, by our continuing to advocate for the oppressed, while welcoming all on their spiritual journey, from wherever they may come. Thank you for being with us today. Please contact us at any time for more information about our congregation and questions you may have.

Thank you!

James Higgins, Guest Music Director

Michael Jayne, Liturgist

The Chancel Choir & All of You, including:

Diane Vaughan, Usher

Media Team – Karin Conrad, Mark Conrad,
Connie Kauffman, Kathy Leis and Hank Maust

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Today's Service is simulcast www.echimestv.org Tune in any time!

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