



*The First Sunday After Christmas Day  
Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ  
December 31, 2023*

Prelude "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" Words and Music by Fred Rogers

Call to Worship

The heart's language existed long before  
languages (as we know them) were born.

They speak ...  
from the creaking whispers of leafless branches  
to the response of howling midnight blizzards.

And, as always, there are the voices  
and the listening to the voices.

From before creation to now,  
the voice calls us to love.  
And the response of the listening heart  
is to do so.

Chancel Choir "Love Grows Here" Words and Music by Don Besig

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

Unison Prayer      “The Work of Christmas” by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and the princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among brothers,  
To make love’s music in the heart.

Please remains as you are and join us in singing

Hymn      “Arise, Shine”      Sing! Prayer and Praise #68

Arise, shine for your light has come!  
And the glory of our God has risen upon you like the sun!  
Lift your eyes, look around, rejoice!  
Lift your eyes, look around, rejoice!

Arise, shine let the light of your love shine through!  
And the world will see the brightness of the new day in you!  
Lift your eyes, look around, rejoice!  
Lift your eyes, look around, rejoice!

## 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 be seated.*

## Joys and Concerns

Please respond, "God, hear our prayers."

## Pastoral Prayer

## Assurance of God's Love

## The Prayer of Jesus

## The Chancel Choir

"Lo, How A Rose / The Rose"

Arranged by Craig Hella Johnson

*Please remain seated.*

Today's Gospel Reading from the Book of Luke 2:22-40

Then when the days stipulated by Moses for purification were complete, they took Jesus up to Jerusalem to offer him to God as commanded in God's Law and also to sacrifice the "pair of doves or two young pigeons" prescribed in God's Law.

In Jerusalem at the time, there was a man, Simeon by name, a good man, a man who lived in the prayerful expectancy of help for Israel. And the Holy Spirit was on him. The Holy Spirit had shown him that he would see the Messiah of God before he died. Led by the Spirit, he entered the Temple. As the parents of the child Jesus brought him in to carry out the rituals of the Law, Simeon took him into his arms and blessed God:

God, you can now release your servant;  
release me in peace as you promised.  
With my own eyes I've seen your salvation;  
it's now out in the open for everyone to see:  
A God-revealing light to all the nations,  
and of glory for your people Israel.

Jesus' parents were speechless with surprise at these words. Simeon went on to bless them, and said to Mary his mother,

This child marks both the failure and  
the recovery of many in Israel,  
A figure misunderstood and contradicted—  
the pain of a sword-thrust through you—  
But the rejection will force honesty,  
as God reveals who they really are.

Anna the prophetess was also there, a daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher. She was by now a very old woman. She had been married seven years and a widow for eighty-four. She never left the Temple area, worshiping night and day with her fastings and prayers. At the very time Simeon was praying, she showed up, broke into an anthem of praise to God, and talked about the child to all who were waiting expectantly for the freeing of Jerusalem.

When they finished everything required by God in the Law, they returned to Galilee and their own town, Nazareth. There the child grew strong in body and wise in spirit. And the grace of God was on him.

## Homily

Hymn            “There’s A Spirit in the Air”  
                         #294 New Century Hymnal            As written here:

There’s a spirit in the air, telling people everywhere:  
“Praise the love that Christ revealed, living working in our world.”

Lose your shyness, find your tongue; tell the world what God has done:  
God in Christ come to stay. Live tomorrow’s life today.

When a stranger’s not alone, when the lost ones find a home:  
Praise the love that Christ revealed, living working in our world.

There’s a spirit in the air, telling people everywhere:  
“Praise the love that Christ revealed, living working in our world.”

## 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      "Go Now in Peace"  
by Nancy Price and Don Besig

Ringing of the Bell

Postlude      "Auld Lang Syne"  
Traditional Scottish tune  
Arranged by Jim Brickman



*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!

Karen Maust, Liturgist

Sean Cameron and The Chancel Choir

Diane Vaughan, Usher

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

And all of you!

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Today's Service is simulcast [www.echimestv.org](http://www.echimestv.org) Tune in any time!

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