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❖ PRELUDE:

Angels We Have Heard on High arr. Larry Shackley

❖ ANTHEM:

Love Came Down at Christmas by John Rutter

❖ OFFERTORY:

Nativity Carol — Francis Patrick O'Brien

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**Pilgrim Congregational Church,  
United Church of Christ  
Christmas Eve Service  
December 24, 2023 6:00pm**



**PILGRIM**  
Congregational Church



Welcome to Pilgrim Congregational Church, United Church of Christ  
A Welcoming, Open and Affirming Congregation  
Christmas Eve Service, December 24, 2023

**Statement of Welcome**

*We honor the Biblical call to love one another as God first loved us. We welcome into the full life and ministry of the church all people of any race, nationality, religious background, educational background, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, economic status, and physical, mental, and emotional abilities.*

**Mission Statement**

*A welcoming home to all spiritual seekers  
Making a difference in our world,  
By fusing our Christian faith with  
everyday life and Serving God by serving others.*

**Children at Pilgrim**

Children are an important part of our worshipping community. We try to make them feel at home!

All are welcome. Professional childcare for infants and toddlers is available in the nursery from 10:15 to the end of the service.

**Please note:** The video of this service is posted online. If you prefer not to be filmed, please sit near the rear of the sanctuary.

**Visual and Hearing Aids**

Hearing devices may be picked up from the table in the narthex.

**Large Print bulletins** and Sermons texts are available.

PRELUDE

Angels We Have Heard on High arr. Larry Shackley

\*CAROL

O Come, All Ye Faithful — Red Hymnal 132 (next page)

WELCOME & GREETING

Rev. Reebee Girash and Sarah Jane Fuller

PASSING THE PEACE

Sarah Jane Fuller

ONE: Peace be with you.

**ALL: And also with you.**

ONE: Let us share the peace of Christ with one another.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Julia Clark

ONE: May the love that breathes life into all humanity and all of creation

**ALL: Be born in us tonight.**

ONE: May the love that brings us healing

**ALL: Be born in us tonight.**

ONE: May the love that overcomes hatred

**ALL: Be born in us tonight.**

ONE: May the love that forgives and renews

**ALL: Be born in us tonight.**

ONE: May the love that brings the blessing of peace

**ALL: Be born in us tonight!**

## O Come, All Ye Faithful

Latin: John F. Wade, 1711-1786  
Tr. Frederick Oakeley, 1802-1880, and others

ADESTE FIDELES Irregular  
John F. Wade's "Cantus Diversi," 1751

1 O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant, O  
2 Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,  
3 Child, for us sin - ners poor and in the man - ger,  
4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py morn - ing,

come ye, O come ye to Beth - le - hem;  
Sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heaven a - bove!  
We would em - brace thee, with love and awe;  
Je - sus, to thee be all glo - ry given;

Come and be - hold him, born the King of an - gels;  
Glo - ry to God, all glo - ry in the high - est;  
Who would not love thee, lov - ing us so dear - ly?  
Word of the Fa - ther, now in flesh ap - pear - ing;

O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him,

O come, let us a - dore him, Christ, the Lord! A-men.

1 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.

Refrain:

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

2 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!

Glory to God, all glory in the highest; [Refrain]

3 Child, for us sinners poor and in the manger,

We would embrace thee, with love and awe;

Who would not love thee, loving us so dearly? [Refrain]

4 Yes, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;

Jesus, to thee be all glory given;

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing; [Refrain]

CAROL

O Holy Night solo by Elena Evrard

## **LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE**

The Moffitt and Clark Family

ONE: Tonight, we relight the four candles of Advent. These candles remind us of God's light, which came to live in the world in Jesus, and still shines in our world today.

**ALL: O God, let your light shine in our hearts tonight and always.**

ONE: We remember that these candles symbolize the hope we find in faith, God's peace which passes all understanding, the joy of Jesus' birth, and the love God has for each and every one of us.

**ALL: God, you bless us with these gifts of hope, peace, joy and love.**

ONE: This evening we light the final candle. It stands in the center of all the others. This is the Christ candle. It reminds us that Jesus is God's greatest gift to us.

**ALL: Thanks and praise and glory be to God in the highest!**

**\*CAROL**

What Child Is This?

**1 What Child is this, who, laid to rest,  
On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,  
While shepherds watch are keeping?**

**Chorus:**

**This, this is Christ, the King,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary!**

**2 Why lies He in such mean estate,  
Where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here  
The silent Word is pleading. [Chorus]**

**3 So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh,  
Come, peasant, king to own Him.  
The King of kings salvation brings;  
Let loving hearts enthrone Him. [Chorus]**

THE CHRISTMAS STORY, IN SCRIPTURE AND SONG

Luke 1: 28 – 33

Fiona McClave

And the angel came to Mary and said, 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by these words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

Luke 2: 2 –7

Sam Boehm

Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

\*CAROL

Away in a Manger

**1 Away in a manger, no crib for his bed  
The little Lord Jesus lay down his sweet head.  
The stars in the Sky looked down where he lay,  
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

**2 The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.  
I love thee Lord Jesus, look down from the sky  
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.**

Luke 2: 8-14

Izzy Leginski

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to all people!'



**\*CAROL**

O Little Town of Bethlehem

**O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see you lie!**

**Above your deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;**

**Yet in your dark streets shines forth the everlasting light,**

**The hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight.**

**For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,**

**While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of  
wondering love.**

**O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!**

**And praises sing and voices ring with peace to all on earth.**

\*CAROL

Hark ! the Herald Angels Sing

**Hark the herald angels sing "Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild God and sinners reconciled"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise join the triumph of the skies  
With the angelic host proclaim: "Christ is born in  
Bethlehem"**

**Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the newborn King!"  
Christ by highest heav'n adored Christ the everlasting Lord!  
Late in time behold Him come. Offspring of a Virgin's womb  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see. Hail the incarnate Deity  
Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel  
Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the newborn King!"**

ANTHEM

Love Came Down at Christmas by John Rutter

MEDITATION

Rev. Reebee Girash

# \*CAROL 116 Angels We Have Heard on High

Traditional French Carol

GLORIA 7.7.7.7. with Refrain  
French Carol Melody

1 An - gels we have heard on high Sweet - ly sing - ing o'er the plains,  
2 Shep - herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous strains pro - long?  
3 Come to Beth - le - hem and see Him whose birth the an - gels sing;

And the moun - tains in re - ply Ech - o back their joy - ous strains.  
Say what may the ti - dings be, Which in - spire your heaven - ly song.  
Come a - dore on bend - ed knee, Christ, the Lord, the new - born King.

REFRAIN

Glo - - - - - ri - a

in ex - cel - sis De - o, Glo - - - - -

- - - - - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o.

## Angels We Have Heard on High — Red Hymnal 116

1 Angels we have heard on high,  
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply  
Echo back their joyous strains.

Refrain:

Gloria in excelsis Deo,  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

2 Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
Say what may the tidings be  
Which inspire your heavenly song? [Refrain]

3 Come to Bethlehem and see  
Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come adore on bended knee,  
Christ the Lord, the newborn King. [Refrain]

## A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Rev. Reebee Girash

Matthew 2:1-12

Julia Johnston

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise ones 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, 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. Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. And 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 place, 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.

\*CAROL

We Three Kings

**1 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 night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading, still proceeding  
Guide us to thy perfect light**

**2 Glorious now behold Him arise  
King and God and Sacrifice  
Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia  
Heaven to earth replies [Refrain]**

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Rev. Reebee Girash

OFFERTORY

Nativity Carol — Francis Patrick O'Brien

**\*DOXOLOGY**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise God all creatures here below.  
Praise God above, ye heavenly host; Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen**

***or***

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below.  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen**

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Rev. Reebee Girash

**No offering is adequate to express our thanks, loving God, but what we give, we bring with joy. May the good tidings live in these gifts and in our lives. May the ends of the earth know the steadfast love of God. Grant comfort to those who mourn, peace to those who face the world's turmoil, and joy to all who serve in Christ's name. Amen**

**SCRIPTURE READING**

Rev. Reebee Girash

John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word,  
And the word was with God,  
And the word was God.  
The Word was in the beginning with God.  
All things came into being through the Word,

And without the Word, Not one thing came into being.  
In him is life, The light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness,  
And the darkness cannot overcome it.  
The light shines in the darkness,  
And the darkness did not overcome it.  
The light shines in the darkness,  
And the darkness will not overcome it.  
The Word became flesh and lived among us,  
And we have seen this glory,  
Glory as of God's own Child,  
Full of grace and truth.

\*THE PASSING OF THE LIGHT

\*CAROL

Silent Night

Duet and Congregation

**CONGREGATION:**

**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.**

DUET:

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.

DUET:

Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light.

Radiant beams from Thy holy face with dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus Lord, at Thy birth. Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.

**CONGREGATION:**

**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.**



\*BENEDICTION

Rev. Reebee Girash

\*CAROL Joy to the World! the Lord Is Come — Red Hymnal 130 (next page)

The Work of Christmas

By the Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and 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 people,  
  
To make music in the heart.

## SOURCE NOTES

*Today's music is provided by the Pilgrim Church Choir and by the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ. The Advent Candle Lighting is by Susan Blain. The Call to Worship and Prayer of Dedication are by Rev. Dr. Robert George included in UCC Worship Ways. The Unison Prayer is by Rev. Dr. Avedis Boynerian. Cover image: Swanson, John August. Shepherds, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=58575> 2021].*

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Merry  
Christmas

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[www.PilgrimCongregational.org](http://www.PilgrimCongregational.org)  
Sunday Worship 10:30 am