Congregational Church
of Easton

Friday, December 24, 2021
Christmas Eve
5:30 p.m.
PRELUDE
“Christmas Medley”

WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT
Still, Still, Still

**SUNG CALL TO WORSHIP** (#132 PH verses 1 & 4)
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!

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy evening,
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;

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

**CAROL** #134 PH  O Little Town of Bethlehem

1. O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!
2. For Christ is born of Mary, And gathered all a bove,
3. How sil - ent ly, how si - lent ly, The won - drous gift is given!
4. O ho - ly Child of Beth - lehem! De-scend to us, we pray;

A bove thy deep and dream-less sleep The si - lent stars go by;
While morn - tals sleep, the an-gels keep Their watch of won - dering love.
So God in - parts to hu - man hearts The bless - ings of his heaven.
Cast out our sin and en - ter in; Be born in us to - day.

Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth The ev - er - last - ing Light;
O morn - ing star to geth - er Pro - claim the ho - ly birth!
No ear may hear his com - ing, But in this world of sin,
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels The great glad ti - dings tell;

The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee to - night.
And praise we sing to God the King, And peace to men on earth.
O come to us, a - side with us, The dear Christ en - ters in,
Our Lord Em - man - u - el! A-men.
LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES AND CHRIST CANDLE
Isaiah 9: 2-7 The Ostrove Family

UNISON PRAYER OF ADVENT
Father, all-powerful God, your eternal Word took flesh on our earth when the Virgin Mary placed her life at the service of your plan. Lift our minds in watchful hope to hear the voice which announces his glory and open our minds to receive the Spirit who prepares us for his coming. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION
Most Loving God, who teaches us to give thanks for all things, and to place all our cares upon You, keep us from faithless fear and needless anxieties, and grant that no clouds of this mortal life hide us from the light of your love which is immortal and made alive to us in Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Words of Assurance: Tune #125 PH (Good Christian Men Rejoice)

Good Christian men, rejoice, with heart and soul and voice;
Now ye need not fear the grave; Jesus Christ was born to save!
Call you one and call you all. To gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

SOLO Is There Room at the Manger for Me? Rev. Amanda Ostrove

PRAYERS
Celebrations and Concerns of the Community
Silent Prayer
Pastoral Prayer
The Lord’s Prayer (debts/debtors)
Choral Response: #769 NCH ~ Hear our prayer, O God, hear our prayer, O God;
Incline your ear to us and grant us your peace. Amen.

**CAROL #146 PH While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks (See next page)

**THOSE WHO ARE ABLE MAY STAND **
LARGE PRINT BULLETINS ARE AVAILABLE PLEASE ASK AN USHER FOR ASSISTANCE
PH—Red Pilgrim Hymnal NCH—Black New Century Hymnal
It came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all
the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor
of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. Joseph also went up from
Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called
Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary
his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the
days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her
firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because
there was no room for them in the inn.
Away in a Manger

Carol #137  PH (verses 1 & 2)

Away in a manger, no crib for his bed, The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head. The stars in the sky looked down where he lay, The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay. 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: 8-16

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them: and they were afraid. The angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, 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, goodwill and peace to all. And it came to pass, as the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us”.

Angels We Have Heard on High

Carol #116  PH (verses 1 & 3)

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. Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing; Come adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King. Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Matthew 2: 1-11

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, “And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.”’ Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, enquired of them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, ‘Go and search diligently for the young child; and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.’ When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.
CAROL #143 PH (verses 1 & 5)  

We Three Kings

We three kings of Orient are, Bearing gifts we traverse afar. Field and fountain, moor and mountain, Following yonder star. O star of wonder, star of night, Star with royal beauty bright, Westward leading, still proceeding, Guide us to thy perfect light. Glorious now behold him arise, King and God and Sacrifice; Alleluia, alleluia! Sounds through the earth and skies. O star of wonder, star of night, Star with royal beauty bright, Westward leading, still proceeding, Guide us to thy perfect light.

Matthew 2: 12, Luke 2: 17-20  

Sarah Nasciemento

The wisemen, being warned by God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, departed into their own country another way. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

MEDITATION  

Hope, Wonder, and Awe

I always loved the part of the Christmas story when the Wise men came from the East. As a little girl in the Christmas pageant, they were my favorite characters because they wore the crowns, the special costumes, and carried interesting and exotic gifts. But what sticks out to me now is that they saw a star in the distance and just set out from their respective lands and lives trusting that they were going to find something amazing at the end of that light. They trusted that this was a sign from God that something great, something amazing, was about to take place.

I often wonder would any of us in this modern-day world follow such a sign from God with no certainty of what we might find at the end of journey. We live in a society where our heads are mostly down in our electronic devices; devices that tell us where to go, how to get there, and how to avoid traffic. And most often we already know where our goal is going to be, with all our technology we expect to arrive at our final destination: a person’s house, a place of business, a hospital, or a church. But what have we gained during that journey?

The wise men, or magi, saw the star and set out. They didn’t follow maps. Their faces were not looking down. But they looked up into the night skies and journeyed, gaining hope with each step they took that they might meet a miracle from God; a miracle that promised a new world. So tonight I look into our night skies and I am still as awe struck as I was as a young child. A sky so large that it reminds me of how small I am in a universe that is so vast and I feel uneasy, mystified, and I am reminded of what is truly important.

As big as our universe is, I am reassured that to God I am important enough that he took the time to send his only son to bring hope back to our lives. Now I am not being critical of the technology that we have. I use it all. I rely heavily upon those GPS apps. But once and awhile, it is important to put down the phones, the tablets, the computers and other devices. It is important to put them down or turn them off because their noise becomes a distraction from the word of God. They distract from his gentle guidance and the beauty of our world around us.

We live in a world where if we have a question, no matter what it is, all we need is Google. You swipe, type, or voice in your question and sure enough there will be some sort of attempt at an answer. We can find out the history of astronomy, learn the names of the stars and constellations. We can teach ourselves how to use the stars as a map. Something I once tried to learn for a class and failed at terribly. And when we pose google with a question without answers, we get all the message boards where conversation is taking place about those very
same questions.

But we pay a price for those instant answers. We lose the openness to feeling God’s presence in the moment. We lose the wonder, the awe, the uneasiness and the feeling of connecting to something more than ourselves. Tonight you heard about the Wise men from the gospel of Matthew, “We have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him”.¹ If we read into this a bit it says they saw the star in the east, knew of God’s promise to the people of Israel, and they were filled with enough hope to travel hundreds of miles over 3 years’ time by camel or foot to be amongst the first to great the new age.

This Christmas Eve, we too can be like the Wise men. We too can place aside our devices and just allow for God to speak his joy, his love, his peace, and his hope to our hearts. Allow for God to remind you this very night what Christmas is really about, “Peace with God, peace with others, and peace in your own heart.”² God is still sending us signs and wonders. God is still sending us those beacons to alight hope in our hearts and lives. We just need to make the time to notice them. So as you leave tonight, take a moment before getting into your cars and before going on to your dinners and celebrations and allow for God to wrap you in his peace and hope. Look into the night sky and see what those wise men saw. God’s inspiration beaming down upon a world in need of inspiration, awe, and love. Embrace that love, awe, and hope and allow for it to inspire you to peace in the year to come.

THE OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS AND OURSELVES

Gathering of the gifts with Offertory
Offertory Anthem The Little Drummer Boy
Presentation of the gifts with praise

**Doxology #515 PH

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

**CIRCLE OF LIGHT

You are invited to bring your candles and form a circle around the sanctuary. For safety, each small child holding a candle should have an adult without a candle supervising. We will pass the light from the Christ Candle around the circle as we sing Silent Night (words on last page)

**BENEDICTION

Please extinguish candles

¹ Matthew 2: 2, RSV.
² Rick Warren, 21st century.
Confirming Deacon—Leon March
Welcomer — Phil Doremus
Ushers & Offering — Pat and Judy McCarty
Scriptures— Tom Linley, Sara Trup, Pat McCarty, and Sarah Nasciemento
Zoom Facilitator — Jim Bromer

In light of the rising numbers of infections, we recommend that all people please remain masked during the worship service. We will not police people but we ask that people be respectful of those that might have small children or compromised health. Thank you for your compliance.

We thank all who have helped decorate the Sanctuary with Poinsettias in celebration of Christmas and in Thanksgiving to God.
Merry Christmas!
Welcome to worship this holy night.
We are delighted to have you with us.

May the Christmas message of hope
Permeate your heart and home
And be the reason you celebrate
With precious family and friends —
And may a fresh expectation
For the New Year and all it holds,
Cause you to rejoice in God’s goodness
And fill you with Love, Joy and Peace.

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The Carlson Family
In loving memory of Grandpa Roy

Daisy Colonnese
In memory of Anthony Colonnese

Jane Kondratovich
In memory of Kim, Walter Kondratovich & Ralph Kemp

Nathalie Taranto
In honor of all health workers and all educators

Pat and Judy McCarty
In honor of our children

Claudia and Peter Nielsen
In memory of Borge Nielsen

Rev. Amanda and Bill Ostrove
In memory of Florence Kochuk

Barbara Trup
In memory of Butch Trup
Silent Night, Holy Night

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,
Son of God, love’s pure light;
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

Silent night, holy night
Wondrous star, lend thy light;
With the angels let us sing,
Alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!