

*Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ
December 24, 2024 5:00 PM Service*

A Voice Speaks

*The silence of the night is broken by the cry
of a baby meeting the world for the first time.
Is there a sound in all the earth more awesome,
More lovely, more full of wonder than the sound
of a child's first complaint about being banished from the Garden,
the place of dreaming innocence?*

The Ringing of the Bell

Prelude "Christmas Song"

by Vince Guarald; Sean Cameron

The First Lesson

In the beginning – everything began! And before everything began, there was God. God was – before everything. The Holy Spirit and Christ and God – before everything were there.

And God sent Christ into the world through – Jesus in a very special way. And, since then everything is changed and changing. Everything.

The Light of Jesus is always with us, around us, in us!
Light, Hope; Light Peace; Light Joy; Light Love;
Light of Christ, Emmanuel – God with us.

Congregational Response

“One Candle is Lit”

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, wander where lion and lamb gently play,
Where wicked 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.

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 "A Voice Calls Out..."

Listen to the call of John the Baptist's voice in your heart:
"I am the voice shouting in the desert:
Prepare the road for the One to come;
make the path clear for this One to travel!
Every valley will be filled up and leveled out,
the hills and the mountains will be graded for easy passage!
Let nothing be in the way! No winding roads, no rough paths.
Make the path open, welcoming, affirming
for everyone to see the One, who comes with love for all.
The One who reveals Emmanuel, "God with us" God...
for a world then and now – sorely in need of this One!"

A Voice Speaks

*It is as though the distance
between the near and the vast
was telescoped into quintessential knowing:
that there is a human perspective
within which space and time,
us and God,
the near and vast,
are one.*

**Congregational Response "Mary, Woman of the Promise"
#123 New Century Hymnal**

Mary, woman of the promise; vessel of your people's dreams:
Through your open, willing spirit waters of God's goodness 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 the compassion; wounded by your offspring's 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.

Third Lesson An Angel...

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 Gabriel 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. The Archangel continued, "God has chosen you, Mary, to be the mother of a child, a son, whom you will name Jesus."

"This simply is not possible," said a trembling Mary.

Gabriel gently replied, "Mary, everything is possible with God."

And with these words and Gabriel's loving voice – calmness overtook Mary in ways she could not understand. She bowed her head and replied from deeply within her heart, "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.

**Congregational Response "Come, O Long-Expected Jesus"
New Century Hymnal #122, vs. 1,2,1**

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.

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

A Voice Speaks

*Let's go farther down into that night.
An unlikely story about God sneaking into history,
to where we least expect the sacred.*

*This time,
as the first child
of a woman and a man,
on their way to marriage.
Young, marginalized,
prisoners of their own time:
exiles in their own land,
captives of political and religious
and social confabulations...*

Solo

"O Holy Night"

Words by John S. Dwight

Music by Adolphe Adam

Fourth Lesson

The Night of Jesus's Birth...

The Emperor Augustus had decreed, as emperors and dictators do, that all the world should be registered so taxes and control over the marginalized could be secured. Augustus required that everyone travel to the towns where their families were from to complete the census.

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.

Mary was engaged to Joseph and expecting a child. While they were in Bethlehem, Mary's time arrived, and she gave birth to Jesus. It was there, in Bethlehem, that the child Jesus was born, wrapped in cloth and placed in a manger because there was no room at the inn, with all those traveling to complete the emperor's order.

Congregational Response

"What Child is This"

#148 New Century Hymnal v. 1,3

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?
This, this, the angels sing,
is Christ, God's holy offering;
Haste, haste your praise to bring
the babe, the child of Mary.

Bring gifts of incense, gold, and myrrh;
come join in jubilation;
The Holy Child, though meek and mild,
has come with God's salvation.
Raise, raise the song on high,
the mother sings her lullaby;
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
the babe, the child of Mary.

A Voice Speaks

*No wonder their lives
were interrupted by dreams, angels,
and of all things,
by shepherds.*

Fifth Lesson Angels Appear to the Shepherds...

While all this was happening, some distance away, other angels, other messengers of God, suddenly appeared before a group of terrified shepherds, frightened by the star that shined so brightly to the East.

“Do not be afraid; Listen! We bring you good news of great joy for everyone! To you, this nation and 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!

Then the angels told them how they would be able to find the infant Jesus, and the shepherds hurried in the way they were told to go.

Congregational Response “Angels We Have Heard on High”

New Century Hymnal #125, vs. 1, 2

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.

Shepherds why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be, which inspire your heavenly song.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo. Gloria, in excelsis Deo.

Sixth Lesson The Wise Travelers...

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.

Congregational Response

"Who Would Think That What Was Needed"

#153 New Century Hymnal vs. 1,2

Who would think that what was needed to transform and save the earth
Might not be a plan or army proud in purpose, proved in worth?
Who would think, that despite derision, that a child should lead the way?
God surprises earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas Day.

Shepherds watch and sages wonder, monarchs scorn and angels sing;
Such a place as none would reckon hosts a holy helpless thing;
Stabled beasts and passing strangers watch a baby laid in hay:
God surprises earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas Day.

Sixth Lesson continues

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.

At the same time, King Herod had 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. “Yes,” they said. This very well could be.

That was enough for Herod.

Making believe that he wanted to celebrate the birth of this amazing child, Herod called in the Wise Travelers. asking them to seek out this child and tell them where he was, so that he, too, might go and worship him.

They agreed, 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, embracing the family and presenting them with the gifts they had brought. They were in awe and amazement the whole time. Christmastime was here!

Musical Response

“Christmas Time is Here”

by Vince Guaraldi

Seventh Lesson

O What a Night...

The shepherds and the Wise Travelers joined with others that night. It was a glorious evening! They shared their stories and everyone knew, somehow they knew, that this – what they had just seen and been part of – would change everything. Everything.

The Wise Travelers began their journey home. But not by way of Herod. They had been forewarned in a dream of the Herod’s intentions to destroy his perceived challengers, so they traveled home by a different route. Herod was left out-manuevered and furious.

And there were other concerns for the safety of the young family.

An angel told Joseph not to go back to Nazareth, because King Herod would surely find them 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.

Congregational Response

“O Little Child” from *Emmanuel*

by Dorothy Davidson Hausske

O little Child,
I bring a rose to the Rose of Sharon;
Lilies to the Lily of the Valley,
Stars to the morning stars,
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.

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

Passing of the Peace

Filled with this joy of togetherness, we share the Peace of Jesus Christ; may it find its way into the hearts of all around the world... Friends, with this in our hearts...

**May the Peace of the Risen Christ be with you!
And also with you!**

Let us offer one another a sign of peace!

Candle Lighting

Congregational Response

"Joy to the World!"

#132 New Century Hymnal vs. 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!

Congregational Response**"The First Nowell"**

#139 New Century Hymnal, v. 1,2

The first Nowell, the angel did say,
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay.
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold wither's morning that was so deep.
Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell,
born in a manger, Emmanuel.

They looked above and saw a star
shining in the east, beyond them far;
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continues both day and night.
Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell,
born in a manger, Emmanuel.

Congregational Response "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, Child of God, 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.

A Voice Speaks

*The silence of the night is broken by the cry
of a baby meeting the world for the first time.
Is there a sound in all the earth more awesome,
More lovely, more full of wonder
than the sound of a child's first complaint
about being banished from the Garden,
the place of dreaming innocence?*

*Often, we might have thought that that first cry
might be as close as we ever might get
to hearing the voice of God.*

*In the cry,
God articulates, with unmistakable clarity,
God's commitment to human life
and to a human future.*

*In the cry, God affirms the future for all of us –
and promises the past a home
in human memory.*

*Christmas is the story without equal
of God's magnificent obsession with us –
our earth – and with our destiny.
One and all.*

The Ringing of the Bell

Approach to the Creche with the Baby

* "A Voice Speaks" built upon the gifts of writing
by friend and mentor Joseph H. Gilmore

***Go in Peace.
Merry Christmas!***



2024 CHANCEL POINSETTIAS

DONATED BY:

Tom and Kay Wolf

Karen E. Gunkel-Lewis

Jerry Avolio and Gini McLaughlin

Pat Mahar

Karen and Hank Maust

Sue Lanchantin

Kathy and Peter Leis

Connie and Roger Kauffman

Heather and Mariana Dominguez

Jenna Murphy

Mike and Judie Jayne

James and Elise Cesare

Debby Langstaff

Hilda Baeza

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Kathy and Peter Leis

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Bob and Gail Acker

Jean and Jeff Newcombe

Connie and Roger Kauffman

Mike and Judie Jayne

Karen and Hank Maust

Pat Mahar

Karen E. Gunkel-Lewis

Jenna Murphy

DONATED BY:

Jerry and Susan Ryan

IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

Our dear Riley and Loved Ones

My brother Kurt Gunkel

Mac and Shirley McLaughlin; Jerry and Betty Avolio

All dear family and friends

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

Paul Lanchantin and Paul Jr.

Shirley and James McMann; Mike and Herminie Bavosa

Phil and Loved Ones

Ron Robinson

Loved Ones

Special Friends

The Cesare and Wysong Families

Fred Langstaff

Loved Ones

IN HONOR OF:

Abigail and Olivia Linsner

The MacGowan and Polokowski Families

Our wonderful grandchildren – Kayla, Amanda, Rex, Ruby, Gavin and Addi

Our grandchildren – Chris Jr, Gabby, Liam, Matthew, Lulu, Abbey & J.J.

Katie, Elise and Jimmy

Our Family

All the faithful and hardworking members of Sayville Congregational UCC

All Veterans

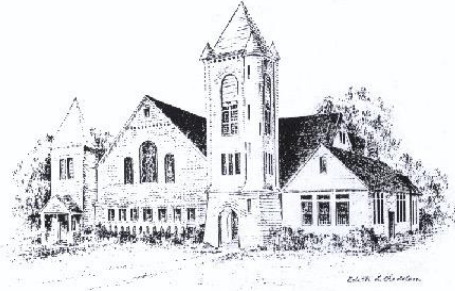
My grandson Beren Minogue

Mom

SPECIAL INTENTIONS:

In Celebration of Families – Ryan and Chiappino And Church





Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ

For more than a century and a half, Sayville 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.

Thank you!

Rev. Becky West, Guest Preacher
Sean Cameron, Music Director

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

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Today's Service is being simulcast on our church channel at
www.echimestv.org Tune in any time!

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