



The Gift of Being Present

An Advent/Christmas Worship Series
Sunday, December 24, 2023

5 pm

Christmas Eve



GUESTS, Welcome to our faith community. To learn more about us please visit our website at www.unionucc.org or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/unioneffs.

Let us know you're here by completing the Welcome Card in the racks in front of you and hand it to a pastor or drop it in the offering plate. Feel free to call or email a pastor.

Vision Statement

UNION UCC: RELEVANT, ENGAGED, and GROWING

Mission Statement

Our church is a diverse family of believers, spiritually united in Christ, rooted in a rich heritage and growing with vitality into the future. We proclaim God's word, nurturing and inspiring dedicated Christian discipleship through worship, education, pastoral care, fellowship, and outreach within our community and the world.

***No matter who you are or where you on life's journey,
you are welcome here.***

Lay Reader: Eric Minnich

Sound: Mike Baer, Dawn Dengler

Sunday Set Up Staff and Camera/ Online Team: Payge Haydt,
Hannah Minnich, Ryleigh Minnich

***Please stand in body or spirit.**

Prelude Music

Christmas Is Coming

Matt Gerry, Trumpet with **Blake Hoppes**

Angels Share (a Scottish souvenir) Jonas Mollberg

Mike Baer, Guitar

The Little Drummer Boy Katherine Kennicott Davis

Instrumentalists: Gareth Hill, Lucas Maxwell, Saxophone;
Andy Hill, Andy Dyszel, Justin Bower, Matt Gerry, Trumpet;
Craig Knauss, Cameron Kuntz, Clarinet; **Mike Baer**,
Trombone, **Isaac Brace**, Snare Drum.

Director: **Mitchell Roth**

Fantasia on Greensleeves Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Payge Haydt, Viola with **Blake Hoppes**

Jingle Bells

Mitchell Roth, Andy Hill, Trumpet

All Is Well MW Smith and W Kirkpatrick Arr. G Wall

Emily Bachl, Jacob Roth with **Blake Hoppes**

Welcome

Becoming Present — the Ritual of Light

What Can I Give Him Arr. Mark Hayes

Leader: Welcome, friends, to this special night when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. This year in this church, we have been spending time preparing for this night by becoming more “present.” You can see we have many presents here in the sanctuary. Being surrounded by them all Advent long

has helped us be inspired to be more present — to ourselves, to each other, and to God. It all started with the idea that we can spend a lot of time worrying about finding the perfect Christmas gifts. Deep down we want people in our lives to know they are special and that we love them. But sometimes we overlook the greatest gift of all... our very presence. Relationship is the most needed gift in our world. Loneliness and isolation is, according to some experts, the “pandemic of our time.” So no matter how able you are to offer gifts that the world considers “valuable,” really what we need the most is simply to “be with.” That is what one of the names for Jesus — “Emmanuel” — means: “God with us.” And this is the best gift of all.

Solo:

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.

Reader: We have unwrapped a present on each
Sunday of Advent with great anticipation
for the gifts that God reveals.

People: We open our hearts as we open the gifts!

The gift of hope is an essential survival tool
because it reminds us that the hard times do not have the
last word.

The gift of Christ's peace reminds us that we can have
peace even in the midst of non-peaceful situations.

The gift of joy is not the equivalent of happiness,
but rather the deep call to delight in the small things.

The gift of love is the clarion call to us as Jesus' disciples.
The more love we put into the world, the better the world will
be.

And tonight we celebrate the presence of the Light
among us.

Prayer of Presence

Let us pray:
Holy Living God,
you are our Light.
Let this light grow in our lives each day,
so we can be a Present of Light to others.
Unwrap and open our hearts.
May it be so.
Amen.

Musical Offering

What Can I Give Him Rosetti, Shafferman, Hayes
Duet: Emma Milander and Emily Bachl with **Blake Hoppes**

**Being Presence/Present with Each Other –
Passing God's Light**

Please stand in body or spirit.

***Carol #193 O Come, All Ye Faithful**

Gold Hymnal/Hymns for the Family of God

Instrumentalists: **Garet Hill**, **Lucas Maxwell**, Saxophone;
Andy Hill, **Andy Dyszel**, **Justin Bower**, **Matt Gerry**, Trumpet;
Craig Knauss, **Cameron Kuntz**, Clarinet; **Mike Baer**,
Trombone, **Isaac Brace**, Snare Drum.

Director: **Mitchell Roth**

Jacob Roth, Organ

ALL:

**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!**

**Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation;
sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!
[Refrain]**

**Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!
[Refrain]**

Please be seated.

Music Offering Revvin' Up the Reindeer Brady Rymer
Birthday Party Life Kids
Kids Choir

Christmas Song Blake Hoppes

Children's Time with Ms. Tiffany and Friends– The Gift of Children

On Sundays:

Children's Church – during 10:30am Worship for ages 3-grade 5. Kids start in worship with their family and are invited forward for a children's time, They then leave with Ms. Tiffany and return before worship is over. Children will be in **Room 100** and will return before worship is over. If worship ends early, parents are welcome to meet their children downstairs.

Education Hour and Faith Formation for All Ages – 9:15-10:15am on Sundays, ages 3 to grade 7.

Christmas Song Blake Hoppes

Music Offering Carol of the Bells Arr. Matt Gerry
Mitchell Roth, Andy Hill, Justin Bowers, Julie Gavarti, Logan Mesics and Matthew Barbieri Trumpet; **Garet Hill and Dante Gavarati**, Saxophone; **Katelyn Attieh**, Euphonium; **Alex Gross**. Trombone; **Justine Gross**, Tuba; **Grant Pinsley**, Bass.

Scripture
First Reading

Isaiah 9: 2-8, excerpts

Reader: We have been reading the words of the prophet Isaiah in the past few weeks as we begin to understand why we are called to be fully present with one another. Isaiah wrote in a time of occupation and exile of his people and by the end of the Book of Isaiah, the people have been freed. But the scripture we read tonight is toward the beginning of the book and the people are scattered and afraid, feeling alone and despondent. Isaiah speaks what perhaps felt like an impossible prophetic word to remind the people that God is present with them always. Let us read responsively:

*The people walking in darkness are seeing a brilliant light —
upon those who dwell in a land of deep shadows light is
shining!*

*God, you have made the nation greater — you have
brought them abundant joy!*

*They celebrate in your presence as with the harvest celebra-
tions...*

*For a child is born to us, an heir is given us,
upon whose shoulders dominion will rest.*

This One shall be called:

*Wonderful Counselor, the Strength of God,
Eternal Protector, Champion of Peace.*

*This dominion, and this peace, will grow without end,
with David's throne and realm sustained with justice and
fairness,
now and forever.*

Musical Offering

Once in Royal David's City arr. David Willcocks

Jacob Roth, Organ; **Mitchell Roth**, Trumpet

Scripture

Gospel Reading

Luke 2: 1-14, (15-20)

Reader: As we have considered the presence of God, we have encountered an image that winds itself through the scriptures — that of the gentle presence of the Holy holding us close as a shepherd holds a lamb. And tonight the image of those shepherds — who know how to care deeply in each present moment with the flock — are again at the center of the story. They are the ones who first hear the Good News. And while the light initially frightens them, they run toward it, not away. Hear the story from the Gospel of Luke:

In those days, Caesar Augustus published a decree ordering a census of the whole Roman world. This first census took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All the people were instructed to go back to the towns of their birth to register. And so Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to "the city of David" — Bethlehem, in Judea, because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David; he went to register with Mary, his espoused wife, who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for her delivery. She gave birth to her firstborn, a son; she put him in a simple

cloth wrapped like a receiving blanket, and laid him in a feeding trough for cattle, because there was no room for them at the inn. There were shepherds in the area living in the fields and keeping night watch by turns over their flock. The angel of God appeared to them, and the glory of God shone around them; they were very much afraid. The angel said to them, “You have nothing to fear! I come to proclaim good news to you — news of a great joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in David’s city, a savior — the Messiah — has been born to you. Let this be a sign to you: you’ll find an infant wrapped in a simple cloth, lying in a manger.” Suddenly, there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in high heaven! And on earth, peace to those on whom God’s favor rests.” When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem and see this event that God has made known to us.” They hurried and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger; once they saw this, they reported what they had been told concerning the child. All who heard about it were astonished at the report given by the shepherds. Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart. The shepherds went away glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as they had been told.

Music Offering It Came Upon a Midnight Clear
Edmund Hamilton Sears, Richard Storrs Willis
Garet Hill

The Message

Winter's Gifts Pastor Kris

Book suggestion for the season:

Right Here Right Now: The Practice of Christian Mindfulness
Amy G Oden

Oden invites us to practice mindfulness and Christian prayer practices to help anchor our hearts, minds, spirits and bodies this season.

Music Offering

Mary Did You Know, Mark Lowry & Buddy Greene

Olivia Rice, Solo with **Blake Hoppes**

Prayer

Song: Right Here, Right Now Chuck Bell, Marcia McFee

*Solo/Choir: Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we've been given,
to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.*

Leader: In our time of prayers during this Advent and Christmas season, we have been taking the opportunity to practice being fully present in the moment. Mindfulness has deep roots in our Judeo-Christian tradition. The scriptures say "be still and know that I am God." Prayer is an intentional way to sink deeply into the sense of the presence of God among us.

I'd like to invite all of you into a quiet reflection on three questions, each followed by a short silence. Focusing intentionally on thoughts and memories can be a kind of prayer, bringing our lives into a conversation with the Holy. I invite you to take a deep breath and close your eyes if you are comfortable doing that.

The first question is this: Who has been a gift of presence in your life? Whose presence feels like a holy gift for you? Take a moment to see their face or faces emerge in your mind's eye like opening a gift. It may be a memory of someone or a present reality.

The second question is this: In what ways do you try to offer yourself as a gift of presence? What does it feel like when you extend your attentiveness and availability beyond yourself? What difference does it make to someone else for you to be truly present to them?

The third question is this: Is it possible that God's presence is felt more acutely in these moments when we truly tend to one another? As if you are doing last-minute shopping for just the right gift, can you imagine right now how you can, in the future, be a Gift of Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Light — letting these gifts flow through you to someone else? It may be as simple as finding opportunities to speak an encouraging word. Or as complex as actually lifting up someone's circumstances through volunteering or donating.

***ALL SING: Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we've been given,
to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.***

In this prayerful, present moment, we pray for...

In this prayerful, present moment we ask you, Christ Jesus, the
Greatest Gift of All,
to help us savor this moment of celebration of Christmas.
Help us recognize and create moments of sweet presence
rather than filling the voids with the things that do not last.
Help us to stop, notice what we are experiencing,
and accept it with open hearts and minds.
In doing this, we allow you to meet us
in the right here, right now, right where we are.

The Lord's Prayer
ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for-
ever. Amen.**

***ALL SING: Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we've been given,
to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.***

Music Offering

**Were You There on That Christmas Night? Natalie Sleeth
High School Choir**

**Thank you for the many ways in which you support God's
work and God's people here in Neffs and in the community
and world.**

NEWS ABOUT THE MINISTRY AND MISSION OF GOD'S CHURCH



OFFERING

Christmas Mission Offering

Please share your financial support by using the Christmas Mission Offering envelope in your envelope packet, or blank envelope marked - Christmas Mission, or donate online at <http://www.unionucc.org/resources/giving>

-and-sponsorship/ways-to-give/ChristmasMission.

Sixth Street Shelter -Located in Center City Allentown, Sixth Street Shelter provides safe, short-term housing for families who are experiencing homelessness of any configuration and size, this includes mothers, fathers, girls, boys, multi- generational families, or those from the LGBTQ+ community. They help guests grow as an individual and a family unit, increase academic progress, find work, find affordable housing, so they can be successful when they leave. The property has 25 private apartments, a family resource center, playground, and full-choice food pantry for residents.

World Central Kitchen -World Central Kitchen is a not-for-profit non-governmental organization devoted to providing meals in the wake of natural disasters. They have organized meals in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Zambia, Peru, Cuba, Uganda, The Bahamas, Cambodia, Ukraine, Puerto Rico, the United States, and most recently Morocco, Turkey, Syria, and Hawaii. In August 2023, World Central Kitchen set up kitchens in Maui and provided over 6000 meals per day with the help of volunteers.

**Donate to God's Mission and Ministry at UNION UCC
Because of YOU our church changes lives....**

Here are some of the ways you can share your financial generosity at Union.

• **ELECTRONIC GIVING** <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-751X/home> or use the QR code with your cell phone.

Choose an

ongoing regular donation or a single donation with your credit or debit card. (Help us with fees if you can.)

• **FREE Vanco Mobile Faith Engagement app**

Look for our church Union United Church of Christ, Neffs, PA and register your information to



Vanco

contribute.

· **Venmo @unionuccneffs** Make a donation or pay for a fundraiser or event. Complete “What's this for?” See QR code.



Venmo

· **Cash or checks (to “Union UCC”)** Place in the offering plate with a member offering envelope or guest envelope (in the seat racks) or drop in the mail if you're not in person.

Contact John Harting (610-799-2508) or Don Penrod (610-972-8719) or Pastor Kris if you have questions or if you'd like to learn more about other giving options or legacy gifts to Union.

Music Offering

Cantique de Noel (O Holy Night) Adolphe Adam
Emily Bachl, Solo with Blake Hoppes

Please stand in body or spirit.

*** Offering Response**

#128 In the Bleak Midwinter
Black Hymnal/New Century Hymnal

ALL Sing:

**What can I offer, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wise one, I would do my part;
But what can I offer:
all my heart.**

Please be seated.

Candlelighting

Leader: I want to invite us to get our candles ready to be lit. But before we move immediately to celebrating the light, I

want us to take a moment to sit and enjoy the gift of the darkness. Darkness is holy... it was in the dark of the night that Jesus was born from the dark of a womb. Our lives might not always feel “calm” or “bright.” But that does not mean that God is not present. It means that God is growing something within us, just waiting to be born. Too often we rush out of the times when we aren’t sure what is next for us. But if we sit with the darkness for a moment, our eyes begin to adjust, helping us to see more clearly. May we give ourselves the gift of time and room this season to be present, without judgement, to “what is” — to just be... present. If you are comfortable doing so, take a deep breath with me and turn your candles on and let’s sing.

***Carol** Silent Night, Holy Night
Jacob Roth, Organ

Directions: Turn your candle on when the music begins and join in singing.

**ALL: 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**

RAISE YOUR CANDLE:

**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**

***Benediction**

[adapted from Amy Oden, Right Here, Right Now]

Leader: Friends, the carol is over, but again, let us not rush to leave before we take in this moment fully. The Gift of the Light of Incarnation — God with us always — cannot help but spread. As we look around at the faces lit by our candles, what is revealed is the abundance of gifts that we are given — the presence of community, of each other. We are not alone. And we are deeply grateful.

“The good news of Jesus Christ is that God is with us, no matter what, no matter where, no matter when. There is no place you can go where God is not, no time of the day when God is off the clock. This is the teaching of the Incarnation, God with us, Emmanuel.”

Thank you for your presence here tonight. What a gift.

So now go and be truly present in the world
so you may be a gift of presence for others.
That's all that is expected —
that the gift that is YOU
is the best gift you can give.

In the name of the Holy Presence,
the Divine Gift,
and the Spirit of Light that is just waiting for us
to unwrap abundant life.
Merry Christmas!
Amen.

***Closing Carol**

*** Carol** Joy To The World Fanfare Arr. **Matt Gerry Mitchell Roth, Andy Hill, Justin Bowers, Julie Gavarti, Logan Mesics and Matthew Barbieri**, Trumpet; **Garet Hill and Dante Gavarati**, Saxophone; **Katelyn Attieh**, Euphonium; **Alex Gross**, Trombone; **Justine Gross**, Tuba; **Grant Pinsley**, Bass.
Jacob Roth, Organ

ALL:

**1. Joy to the world! The Lord is come:
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing.
And heaven and nature sing.
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.**

**Joy to the world! The Savior reigns:
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,**

Far as, far as the curse is found.

Merry Christmas!

Enjoy the Lights in the Grove, they will be on every night until the New Year.

Postlude Music

Worship Theme ©www.worshipdesignstudio.com

Thank you to our team of angels and elves for their work in decorating the church for Christmas: Claire Kern, Deb Topp, Kathy Bonsell, Kathy Milander, Maryann and Claire Puia, Tiffany Lakatosh, Miranda Brown, and our Children, Worship Committee – Susan Glosan, Edie Fella, Ron Pope, Dan Haftl, Julie & Phil Wehr, Eric & Pam Minnich family, Pastors Kayli and Kris.

Sound Team: Doug Albert, Mike Baer, Pat Sorg, Karl Klinger, Dawn Dengler

Lighting: Damon Gelb

Thank you to our Poinsettia Sponsors and our Helping Hearts and Communion Ministers and Pastor Carrie for delivery to those on our Visitation List.

Thank you to all who helped to make our Advent and Christmas so meaningful. Thank you to everyone who helped clean and decorate our sanctuary, church, and grove. Thank you to those who served as choir members, musicians, ushers, and worship participants. Thank you to our staff, Consistory, and leaders for giving your time and talents so generously.

Thank you to Heintzelman Funeral Home for the white altar poinsettias.

Giving God thanks for your Christmas spirit now and all year long!

INFORMATION FORM AND SURVEY

Members if you haven't yet completed the information form and survey that was sent to you, please do so as soon as possible. This form includes letting us know about your membership status and offers a chance for you to participate in a survey.

Please complete the form either by using the online link provided or by completing a paper copy and returning it to the church.

If you do not want to complete the survey portion that's fine, but please complete the information part of the form and check off your membership status.

Here's the online link to complete it: <https://forms.gle/JEZM4v4EcZ29EktMA>

Paper copies are available in the lobby on Sundays or you can contact the church office for additional paper copies to be mailed to you.

Thank you for your help.



Poinsettia Sponsors

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In Honor Of:

Grandchildren: Emilia, Zoey, Cole, & Emma

Sister & Brother-in-law: Nancy & Albert
Grandchildren: Tyler, Kaylee, Emileigh, Julia, & Hudson

Grandchildren: Ethan, Clay, Carolyn, & Alexa

Our Grandchildren

Grandchildren & Great Grandchildren

My Sons: Darren & Jordan

Grandchildren: Kate, Luke, Carson, and Logan

Our Family

Marilyn Sechler

Michele Motter and Tracy Snyder
Family

In Memory Of:

Parents

Mom & Dad, and Ray Arey

Loved Ones

Gerald Blose

Beloved Parents

Donald & Peggy Ressler, Gleonice & Borman, Jr.

Mary Christ

Parents: Marvin & Beatrice Christman
and Mother: Marjorie Wenhold

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Mothers

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Parents

Loved Ones

Our Parents

Parents

Loved Ones





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of Gordon & Ruth Rothrock
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Doloris Horwith

In Memory Of:

Donald J. Herzog and Veronica J. Fabian
Marjorie Hackett and Loretta Dominy
Margaret Conrad
Parents and Brothers
Dave Fleming
Our parents: George & Helen Karetsky and
Jane & Homer Boysen and sister Ann
Gordon & Ruth Rothrock
Lynne Klinger

Parents: William & Leontine Knauss,
Grandparents: Alvin & Dorothy Grasley,
Parents: Claude & Mary Fritz
Jake Klotzman
Loved Ones
Parents: Earl & Lena Frantz and Russel &
Minerva Minnich
Aunt Mikaela
Loved Ones
Loved Ones
Jack Sr. & Mary Nuschke
Marie & Lawrence Rauch
Donald & Ruby Peters, Norman &
Eleanor Peters, Iva Kern
Loved Ones
Anna Sterling
Fred & Ruth Roberts
Grandparents, Gordon & Ruth Rothrock

Rhonda Santilli
Ronald Sechler
Loved Ones
Janet Snyder
Earl & Lucretio Nuss and Walter & Mary
Steffy
Willard & Dorothy
Family who have passed
Robert Person, Father
Loved Ones
Jack & Janice Liscka
Loved Ones



EVIDENCE OF STEWARDSHIP LAST SUNDAY

Offering (e-giving, envelopes, and plate)	
Last Week	\$7,942.00
Calendar Year 2023 (Jan.-Oct.)	\$ 308,275.00
Calendar Year 2022 (Jan.-Oct.)	\$ 309,414.00
Change from Last Year	-0.4%
Budget FY 2023-24 (July-Oct.)	\$ 128,120.00
Actual Fiscal Year-to-Date (July-Oct.)	\$ 11,2,231.00
Difference in Giving vs. Budget	-12.4%
<i>Additional financial information available in Consistory Minutes</i>	

Attendance Last Week	
8:00 am	56
10:30 am	144
Education Hour	20
Online Views	536
Breathe	

2023 Donations to the Northern Lehigh Food Bank:	
Last Week:	\$, lbs
Total YTD:	6,9707lbs, \$1310

Christmas Mission Donations	\$1,446.00
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Presentations to the Glory of God

**In Memory of Lucille and Paul Schellenberger -
Donna Schellenberger and family**

**In Memory of Loved Ones
by Richard & Barbara Carinci**

Be a sponsor for \$20, send to Union UCC through your offering envelope or online marked Spread the Good News or \$8 for Children's Bulletin. Contact Marissa to sign up for a certain date or to sponsor in honor or memory of someone.

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