



**December 28th, 2025
This, This
Sunday After Christmas
10:30am Worship Only**

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/unionneffs. Let us know you're here by completing the Welcome Card in the racks in front of you.

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 are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.**

Union UCC is an Open and Affirming (ONA) Community.

Lay Readers: Donna Christman

Greeters: Geoff & Sara Jane Brace, Dale & Maria Brace

Ushers: Eric Minnich, Gene Thrash, Jason Klinger,

Marlene Blose, Dale Blose, Kim Pentland, Andy Dyszel

Sound: Pat Sorg

GATHERING

Like the iconic figures gathered around the Christ Child in our nativity scenes, we gather together because we want to know Jesus more as we seek to bring his Reign of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love on earth.

Prelude Music
Mike Baer, Guitar; Payge Haydt, Viola

Welcome to Union UCC!
Welcome & Announcements

We often share parts of worship responsively.

Phrases in Bold = All Read
Phrases NOT in bold = Leader

We Gather at the Scene

Leader: : We have been on a journey of discovery this Advent and Christmas. As our series comes to a close, we ask one more time, "What Child IS This?" One thing is sure, "this, this..." reverberates into our time, our lives, our world as we continue to work for the protection of every child, everywhere.

**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?**

Leader: The Magi see the reverberation of Light and are drawn to it. They, too, were looking for a new world order—one of true peace and compassion. The subsequent story of the flight of the Holy Family as refugees, running from threat of extinction by an insecure tyrant, is much too real in all of human history. Even in the return home, the child of Mary and Joseph would know the heartache of oppression that would shape his ministry—a ministry of proclaiming that God continues to be with us, that we are called to be with one another, even and especially in the midst of hard times.

Reader 1: We light these candles for those who need it most.

Reader 2: For all who need more Hope.

Reader 1: For all who yearn for Peace.

Reader 2: For all whose Joy lays dormant.

Reader 1: For all who need the salve of Love.

Reader 2: For all of who need this Child of Possibility.

Reader 1: Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this: "How do the messages of this child reverberate into our time, our lives, our world?"

Reader 2: What child IS this? This, this, is Christ the King who reigns with hope, peace, joy, and love forever.

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

Prayer of Invocation

ALL: Here, at the nativity of your birth,
give us the courage to face this moment
with the desire for justice.

Open us to new understandings of
the unfolding story of your presence among us.
Show us the true gifts we must bring to our moment,
as we seek a better kin-dom on this earth.

We pray in the name of the Child,
the One Who Reigns in our hearts and lives.
Amen.

Greeting

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Let us pass the peace of Christ with one another.

***Please rise in body or spirit to greet each other and for the first song.**

***Hymn** #179 The First Noel (Gold Hymnal)

The first noel 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 winter's night that was so deep

REFRAIN: Noel, noel! Noel, noel!
Born is the King of Israel!

They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the east beyond them far
And to the earth it gave great light
And so it continued both day and night

REFRAIN: Noel, noel! Noel, noel!
Born is the King of Israel!

And by the light of that same star
Three wise men came from country far
To seek for a king was their intent
And follow the star wherever it went

REFRAIN: Noel, noel! Noel, noel!
Born is the King of Israel!

Please be seated.

10:30 Children's Time

SONG

**ALL: Away in a manger, no crib for a 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.**

Skit with Miss Nikki and Pastors

**ALL: 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.**

Sundays at 10:30am: Worship Children's Church 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. Nikki and return before worship is over. They will return to worship before it's over and if not, please pick up your children in Room 100. If you want your child to stay in worship with you, please let them know.

Also on Sundays 9:15-10:15 am, ages 3 to grade 7. Kids are invited to the Education Hour with Ms. Nikki and Leaders.
Watch for God First Wednesdays and other events too!

We Hear the Story

Introduction by Leader/Reader: In the book, The First Advent in Palestine, author Kelley Nikondeha says this:

"Advent calls us to wrestle honestly with this truth: troubles don't disappear just because Jesus arrived. The world is still harsh and riddled with injustice." The story today reminds us that Jesus and his family became refugees as they fled from the dictator's blood-thirsty desire to remain in power. But Nikondeha goes on to say this: "Only a God who knows and shares our pain can ultimately transform it."

God-is-with-us even now. Hear the ongoing story from Matthew 2:1-12:

This is After Jesus' birth—which happened in Bethlehem of Judea, during the reign of Herod—astrologers from the East arrived in Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the newborn ruler of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay homage." At this news Herod became greatly disturbed, as did all of Jerusalem. Summoning all the chief priests and religious scholars of the people, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem of Judea," they informed him. "Here is what the prophet has written:

“And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
are by no means least among the leaders of Judah,
since from you will come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

Herod called the astrologers aside and found out from them the exact time of the star's appearance. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, after having instructed them, “Go and get detailed information about the child. When you have found him, report back to me—so that I may go and offer homage, too.”

After their audience with the ruler, they set out. The star which they had observed at its rising went ahead of them until it came to a standstill over the place where the child lay. They were overjoyed at seeing the star and, upon entering the house, found the child with Mary, his mother. They prostrated themselves and paid homage. Then they opened their coffers and presented the child with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they went back to their own country by another route.

After the astrologers had left, the angel of God suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph with the command,

“Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you otherwise. Herod is searching for the child to destroy him.”

Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they left that night for Egypt. They stayed there until the death of Herod, to fulfill what God had said through the prophet:

“Out of Egypt I have called my Own.”

Herod became furious when he realized that the astrologers had outwitted him. He gave orders to kill all male children that were two years old and younger living in and around Bethlehem. The age of the children was based on the date Herod had learned from the astrologers. Then what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

“A voice was heard in Ramah
sobbing and lamenting loudly:
it was Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled,
for they were no more.”

After Herod's death, the angel of God appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt with the command, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and set out for the land of Israel. Those who had designs on the life of the child are dead.” Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they returned to the land of Israel. Joseph heard, however, that Archelaus had succeeded Herod as ruler of Judea, and Joseph was afraid to go back there. Instead, because of a warning received by Joseph in a dream, the family went to the region of Galilee. There they settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way, what was said through the prophets was fulfilled:

“He will be called a Nazarene.”

**The Message
Pastor Kayli**

RESPONDING

Our faithful response is to praise God for this story of Emmanuel, God-With-Us, even and especially in the midst of difficulty, for God is indeed with us even still.

Prayers

Great Holy One
by Brian Wren and Susan Haefield

Leader: In this moment of silent contemplation, we lift up our hopes for the world, for its people, for the kind of kin-dom embodied by the child who became the Christ.

Time of Silent Contemplation

*Leader: Holy Living One,
Child of Wanderings,
Spirit of Refuge,*

*we come to you today weary of the repetitious history of
oppression,*

*weary of a too-long arc of justice,
yearning for the day when humanity will be humane.*

We know you are with us,

*for you came to our human story when we needed your message so
much.*

We still do.

We ask, “what child is this that we follow, and who are we
in the scene of this unfolding story?”

We gather at the manger one last time this year,
where we know the lullaby and lament are sung side-by-side and
year-after-year.

Again, we plead for your presence to break into our lives
and show us the light of hope, peace, joy, and love.

And we ask for the courage to stay in the scene of unfolding justice,
preparing the way for your reign of right relationships.

We give you thanks, O God, this day for...

We name our sorrow this day for...

We ask for your forgiveness this day for...

Be with us as we seek to be the Body of Christ in the world.

We pray this in the way you taught us, saying...

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, forever. Amen.**

NEWS ABOUT THE MINISTRY AND MISSION OF GOD'S CHURCH AT UNION

Christmas Mission Offering

You can support this by using the Christmas Mission Offering envelope in your envelope packet, or a blank envelope marked - Christmas Mission, or donate electronically by using any of the options below and noting "Christmas Mission." This year we are supporting:

HUGS Pediatric Cancer Foundation of the Lehigh Valley - When a parent hears the words "your child has cancer," their world is forever altered. PCFLV can immediately step in and offer assistance and support to the entire family.

Allentown Rescue Mission - Since 1900, the Allentown Rescue Mission has rescued, rehabilitated, and restored men in crisis across the Greater Lehigh Valley. Their approach is both practical and spiritual, meeting immediate needs while addressing root causes through the power of Christ.

OFFERING



Thank you for all the ways that you help us make God's dream a reality at Union UCC.

Electronic Giving



ELECTRONIC GIVING <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-Z51X/home> or QR code. Single or ongoing donation with credit/debit card. Help with fees if you can.

Vanco Mobile



FREE Vanco Mobile Faith Engagement app. Look for our church Union United Church of Christ, Neffs, PA and register your information to contribute.

Vanco



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

Cash or checks to "Union UCC" Place in Sunday's offering plate with a member offering envelope or guest envelope (in the seat racks).

Please reach out to Don Penrod or Pastor Kris if you have questions or if you'd like to learn more about other giving options or legacy gifts to Union.

Invitation to the Offering

What gifts are adequate for the Child Enthroned by Love? Our theme song says, “so bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come peasant, king, to own him.” Whether what we have to give is simply the gift of our presence and gratitude, or if we are privileged with coffers of precious resources, we give what we can. In this way we “take ownership” of our role in the scene, in the unfolding story of Love.

Music Offering

*** Offering Response**

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

Please stand in body or spirit.

SENDING FORTH

Just as our theme carol asks, “what child is this?” we, too, have come with our questions this day. We go into the world with answers of Good News, being the Body of Christ through our words and deeds.

We Ask, We Answer

As we prepare to go into the world, let us ask and answer the question we came with.

What child IS this?

This is the Truth, the Way, and the Life.

What child IS this?

This is the one whose love is the measure of true companionship.

What child IS this?

This, this is the “King of Kings” whose grace is the measure of real leadership.

Benediction

May the Sovereign of Love,
the Child of Grace,
the Spirit of Resistance to Injustice
be with you now and as you go.

Amen.

***HYMN #171 Joy to the World**

Gold Hymnal

**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**

**He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of his love, and wonders of his love
And wonders, wonders of his love.**

**Postlude Music:
Mike Baer, Guitar
Payge Haydt, Viola**

Worship Theme: c. Worship Design Studio

**Worship Design Team: Kathy Bonsell, Claire Kern, Deb Topp,
Pastor Kris, Nikki Pentland, Pastor Kayli**

**Sanctuary Decorations: Kathy Milander and Family,
Maryann Puia and Family**

**Outside Decorations: Worship Committee, Donna Christman
and Teresa Dalrymple**

Special thanks to Ori Handwerk and Phil Wehr

EVIDENCE OF STEWARDSHIP LAST SUNDAY

Offering (e-giving, envelopes, and plate)	
Last Week	\$15,972.00
Calendar Year 2025 (Jan-Nov)	\$338,493.00
Calendar Year 2024 (Jan.-Nov)	\$320,290.00
Change from Last Year	5.7%
Budget FY 2025-2026 (July-Nov)	\$ 156,840.00
Actual Fiscal Year-to-Date (July-Nov)	\$151,776.00
Difference in Giving vs. Budget	-3.2%
<i>Additional financial information available in Consistory Minutes</i>	

Christmas Attendance	
Dec 21 (8 am)	58
Dec 21 (10:30)	136
Dec 23	120
Dec 24 (3 pm)	300
Dec 24 (5 pm)	190
Dec 24 (8 pm)	276
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!	

2025 Donations to the Northern Lehigh Food Bank:	
Last Week:	1,000 lbs \$100
YTD	6,590 Lbs \$1,560.00

Christmas Mission: \$2,146.00

Presentations to the Glory of God

In Memory of Walt Disney—Don Steffy

Good News Sponsor—for \$20 help us cover the costs of advertising on social media, mailings, and local papers.

Children's Bulletin Sponsor—for \$8 cover the cost of bulletins for children. Send to Union UCC through your offering envelope or online marked Spread the Good News or Children's Bulletin. Contact Sarah to sign up for a certain date or to sponsor in honor or memory of someone.