

ZION REFORMED UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
DECEMBER 24TH, 2020 @ 7 P.M.



The Light Shines!

Life often is chaotic and stressful, often seeming as if the darkness has overcome our very being, we wonder if the Savior really will come. Sometimes we wonder if we will know anything besides that darkness that presses down like a thick, wet blanket. This year has been a test of our resolve as we have had to deal with a global pandemic like no other that most of us can remember, but yet our souls know that God is there even when we only see the darkness. We listen intently to the tap, tap, tapping of our Savior trying to break through to us.

And today, if on no other day, the light breaks through, and we notice it. The light that has been with us all along, we notice it this day, Christmas day. *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined."* On Christmas, we celebrate the light that has broken through our darkness; the light that penetrates the dark caves of our souls; the light that brings us hope and peace because with this light comes the reassurance that our Savior has arrived; our Savior who is the Light of the World.

Christmas is about *light*, for Jesus is the Light of the world! We love to sing "Silent Night, Holy Night," but this great carol is not about night or darkness. It's about the light. "Son of God love's pure light, radiant beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace." We sing at Christmas because we have something to sing about! Light has come into the world!

Merry Christmas Zion, let us celebrate the birth of our Savior, --the light in our lives!

WE GATHER

Gathering Music✦

"Christmas Carols Medley on Harpsichord"

Words of Welcome

Prelude to Service Interlude✦

"O Holy Night"

Lighting the Advent Candles

We are a people of hope. Our hearts are full of anticipation for the coming of our beloved Christ Child. For God is to be among us and we will see a great light in the midst of our night. Let us light the Candle of Hope.

[The candle of hope is lit by Carol Mooers.]

We are a people who seek peace. We know that God has told us to turn our weapons of war into instruments that benefit all humanity. In the name of that Child who was born long ago to become the Prince of Peace, we now light the Candle of Peace.

[The candle of peace is lit by Daisy Schlotterbeck.]

Joy to the world! Our God is now coming to bring us "good news." May we sing songs of praise and gladness. We know that our Savior reigns. Let us light the Candle of Joy.

[The candle of joy is lit by Wells Ridenour.]

We are a people who seek to be brought together by the love of Christ. Our faith teaches us that God gives us unconditional love and forgiveness. Accepting God's free gift of grace, we light the Candle of Love.

[The candle of love is lit by Ralph and Scherry Sellers.]

Call to Worship

One: Come, all who are faithful and all who seek joy in your lives.

All: It is the season to sing praises to God for the Christ Child is near.

One: The symbols of hope, peace, joy, and love shine brightly in our hearts.

All: May they remain with us throughout the year.

One: We now share a promise that was fulfilled by God:

All: That our beloved Child is born and will call us to new lives of love, joy, and faith in action. Amen.

Opening Interlude

"O Thou Joyful, O Thou Wonderful"

OUR STORY

First Lesson

Isaiah 9:2-7 (NRSV)
The Savior Reigns
Lector: Burnie Clutz

² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. ³ You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. ⁴ For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. ⁵ For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. ⁶ For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Second Lesson

Luke 1:39-45 (NRSV)
Mary Visits Elizabeth
Lector: Rich Owens

³⁹ In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³ And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴ For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Interlude of Peace

"O Come All Ye Faithful"

Third Lesson

Luke 1:46-55 (NRSV)
Mary's Song of Praise
Lector: Carroll Sager

⁴⁶ And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵² He has

brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

Fourth Lesson

Matthew 1:18-25 (NRSV)

Joseph’s Act of Faith

Lector: Rich Owens

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Interlude of Hope

“Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne”

Fifth Lesson

Luke 2:1-7 (NRSV)

The Savior is Born!

Lector: Carroll Sager

¹ In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also 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. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ 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: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" ¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

Interlude of Joy

"Grand Fantasia on Joy to the World"

Lighting the Christ Candle

Felicity Shafer

We light the Christ candle as a sign to the world that today, in the City of David, a Savior is born, who is Christ the Lord. We no longer have to fear the darkness for our Light has come. That light that enlightens all people has broken into our world. And the world will never be the same again.

One: Christ is Born & All things are made new!

All: Alleluia! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen.

Ringing in Christmas Day

Blessing Our Gifts

Prayer of Dedication

(Everyone is invited to light their own candle at this time and keep it lit until the service is over)

All: With these gifts, dear God, accept the praise and thanksgiving of our hearts, which rejoice in your goodness and love. Let our gifts point to your presence in the world, and further your dream for the world through Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Amen.

Singing of the Carols

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Invitation

One: God is with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Let us open our hearts to the Spirit of Christ, born a long time ago, and born again this night in our lives.

All: We open our hearts to God, the Christ birthing now in our lives, and to one another—precious embodiments of Your creation.

One: We give thanks.

All: We thank God with joy.

The Thanksgiving

One: God of humble births and the stars in the heavens, we thank You for Your persistent love for all creation. We thank You for those who can see You and make connections that lead toward meaning. We thank You for those who are wise—who will journey out to strange lands and unknown territories in search for truth or to bring justice. We thank You for Your way of breathing life into us, and of helping us to take deep breaths when we need them.

All: God of love, creativity, novelty, joy, meaning, peace and hope, in spite of all the challenges on earth and in our personal lives, we give thanks for Your persistence throughout the universe.

One: We rejoice in Your Word through Jesus the Christ, who was born humbly, who communed with those others called outcast, who lived a complex life that sought justice, who died unfairly, and whose Spirit lives among us still.

Remembrance and Offering

One: Remembering Your boundless love, we offer our praise and proclaim our faith:

All: Christ was born. Christ lived and died. Christ comes again and again into our lives.

One: God, we know that Your Spirit is poured on us and on these elements of bread and juice, and we pray that Your love, peace and justice in the world may be born through us.

All: All praise to You, rejoicing in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who lives among us, and the Holy Spirit, who binds us together in love. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

Sharing the Bread and Cup

"The Shepherds at the Manger"

Prayer of Our Savior

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your 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 Yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

SENDING FORTH

Blessing and Sending Forth

One: In the beginning, the Word; the Word was in God's presence, and the Word was God. The Word was present to God from the beginning. Through the Word all things came into being.... In the Word was life, and that life was humanity's light -- a Light that shines in the night, a Light that the night has never overtaken. Go forth to witness to the Light, to the Word, to the Glory of God dwelling in us; Go forth to live in grace and truth.

All: Thanks be to God!

Closing Carol

"Silent Night"

MERRY CHRISTMAS!



The Light Shines!

Art by John Stuart of stushieart.com



IMPORTANT DATES

Week of December 20th



Sunday Worship

December 27th, 11am at www.zionreformed.church/sermons

New Year's Eve Virtual Service

December 31st, 7pm at www.zionreformed.church/sermons

Downtown 4-H Club

December 30th, 4:30pm via Zoom

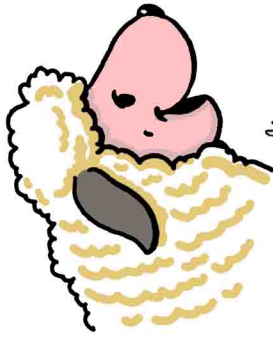
Prayer Requests



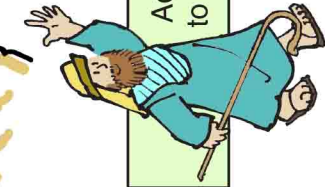
Submit your prayer requests to the church office by phone at 301.739.7244 or email at zionrucc@myactv.net so we can pray for one another. The prayer list of names can be emailed or mailed to you upon request due to privacy concerns.



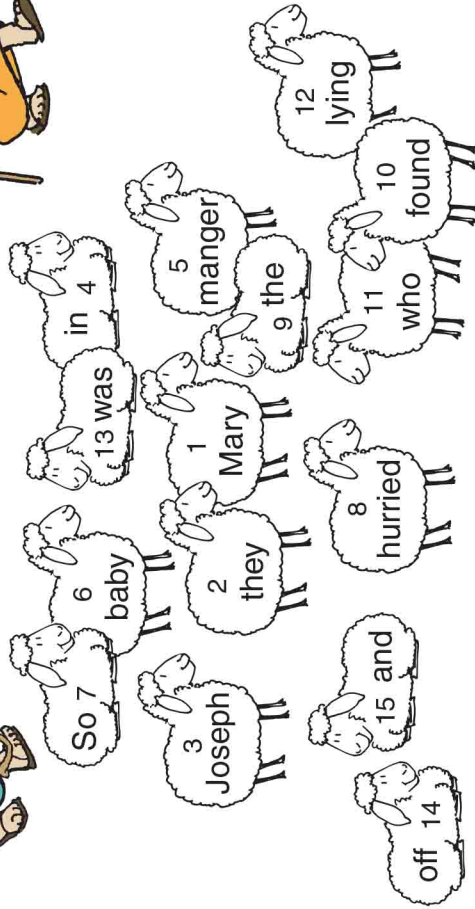
The Light Shines for You!



The shepherds said to one another,
 "Let's go to Bethlehem and see
 this thing that has happened,
 which the Lord has told us about."



Add the two numbers found under each line
 to find the correct word to write on the blank.



$3 + 4 =$	$1 + 1 =$	$6 + 2 =$	$5 + 9 =$	$8 + 7 =$
$1 + 9 =$	$0 + 1 =$	$6 + 9 =$	$2 + 1 =$	
$5 + 10 =$	$4 + 5 =$	$3 + 3 =$	$9 + 2 =$	$7 + 6 =$
$5 + 7 =$	$1 + 3 =$	$6 + 3 =$	$3 + 2 =$	

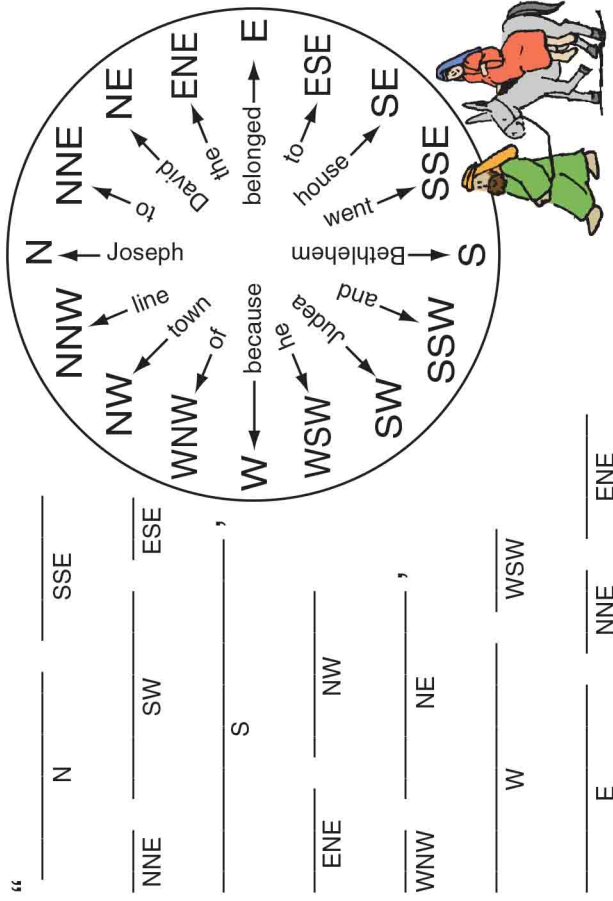
The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God
 for all the things they had heard and seen.

Ages 7+

Jesus Is Born!

Joseph and Mary traveled to register for the census.

Use the compass code to fill in the blanks.



_____ SE _____ SSW _____ NNW _____ WNW _____ NE _____



Zion Reformed United Church of Christ
 201 N Potomac Street
 Hagerstown, MD 21740
www.ZionReformed.church

ACTIVITY PAGE ANSWER KEY

Jesus Is Born!

Joseph and Mary traveled to register for the census.

Use the compass code to fill in the blanks.

Joseph went

NAME	to Judea	SW	to	ESE
------	----------	----	----	-----

the town

of David

because he

belonged ^E to ^{ME} the ^{NE}

house and line of David.



The shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

Add the two numbers found under each line to find the correct word to write on the blank.

So 7

2

11

100

they

and Mi

$$= 9 + 9 =$$
$$\frac{1}{1 + 3i}$$

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen.

So they hurried off and

$\frac{\text{found}}{1+9} = \frac{\text{Mary}}{0+1} = \frac{\text{and}}{6+9} = \frac{\text{Joseph}}{2+1},$

and the baby, who was

lying in the manger.

$$5+7=$$

$$1+3=$$

$$6+3=$$

$$9+2=$$

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen.

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Ring in Christmas Day: Church Bells ringing at the Parish of Walthamstow (St. Mary's Church) in the UK. *Source: YouTube - <https://youtu.be/lrfCdkK3YqY>.

Singing of the Carols: "It's Christmas," Medley of carols arranged by Ed Cash and Chris Tomlin, ©2015 by Alletrop Music, S.D.G. Publishing, SixSteps Songs, and Worship Together Music. All rights reserved. Performed by Chris Tomlin. *Source: YouTube - <https://youtu.be/H0iFgc5GjwA>.

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Zion Reformed United Church of Christ

201 N. Potomac Street, Hagerstown, MD 21740

Office Hours: 8:30-12:30, Monday through Friday

Facebook: @ZionRUCC

YouTube: Zion Reformed UCC

Web: www.zionreformed.church

Email: zionrucc@myactv.net

Phone: 301.739.7244



Rev Katie Penick, Interim Minister

Phone: 240.418.8028 Email: zionruccpastor@myactv.net