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THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHESTER

An Open & Affirming Congregation of
The United Church of Christ
December 24, 2025, 5:00 p.m.
Christmas Eve

A FESTIVAL OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

WELCOME		Rev. W. Alan Froggatt
PRELUDE	*Star Over Bethlehem/Braid Dina Vida Vinyar*	Tegner/Widen
INTROIT	*See Amid the Winter's Snow*	(anon)

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE — Diane Adams & Jordan Adams Sack

John 1.1, 14a: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

The word / whispered in a still small voice / suggested by a God who will not let us go / inferred by a people straining to hear / spoken by prophets on street corners and in abandoned alleyways / sung by angels and beggars / shouted from rooftops of shelters and tenements / thundered throughout a war weary world / incarnate in a baby's first breath / grace and truth made flesh / we light a candle for the word in our midst.

Lighting the Candle of Christ - *(Light all the candles: purple, purple, pink, purple and white.)*

Let us pray together: Dear God, as we stand at the cusp of a new world, between midnight and day's dawning, grant us the courage to live your Word. The word that pierces the darkness, the world that speaks truth to power, the word that insists on

its own peace, the word which is born and reborn in every one of your children, beginning again tonight. Amen.

*HYMN *O Come, All Ye Faithful* 132

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!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, sing, all ye citizens of heaven above! Glory to God, all glory in the highest; O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

Child, for us sinners poor and in the manger, we would embrace thee with love and awe; who would not love thee, loving us so dearly? 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 morning, Jesus, to thee be all glory given; Word of th'Eternal, 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.

PRAYER OF ADORATION

Holy God, we gather this evening as a community of faith. We come from different homes, different families, different towns and different lives, but tonight you make us one in the presence of our newborn Savior. Bless our worship here: give us the grace to receive Christ into our hearts, the courage to let him live in our lives, and the strength to serve him in every time, place and circumstance. Let the meaning of our common worship make this season holy and blessed for each of us, through Christ our Lord; Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Isaiah 11.1-9 Cheryl Archer

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the reverence of the Lord. His delight shall be in the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like

the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

ANTHEM *Angel's Carol* J. Rutter

POEM *Christmas Carol* Rick Holloway
Sara Teasdale (1884-1933)

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON Luke 2.1-20 Ed Sypher

HYMN *What Child is This?* 153

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 is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing: Haste, haste to bring him praise, the babe, the son of Mary.

Why lies the child in manger bare where ox and ass are feeding? Give heed, draw near, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading. This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing: Haste, haste to bring him praise, the babe, the son of Mary.

So bring him incense, gold and myrhh, come, rich and poor, to own him; the King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him. This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing: Haste, haste to bring him praise, the babe, the son of Mary.

MEDITATION *"Santa Writ Large?"*

HYMN *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* 149

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold; "Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven great news we bring." The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled, and still their heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world; above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hovering wing, and ever o'er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long, beneath the angel strain have rolled two thousand years of wrong; and we, through bitter wars, hear not the lovesong which they bring: O hush the noise and end the strife, to hear the angels sing.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load whose forms are bending low, who toil along the climbing way, with painful steps and slow, look now, for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing; O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!

For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophet bards foretold, when with the ever circling years comes round the age of gold, when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling, and the whole word send back the song which now the angels sing.

OFFERTORY *Bethlehem Wind* J. Martin

POEM *[little tree]* Ella Blythe Froggatt
e.e. cummings (1894-1962)

*HYMN *Silent Night, Holy Night* (on reverse)

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 Al-le-lu-ia! 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.

PEAL OF THE CHRISTMAS BELL