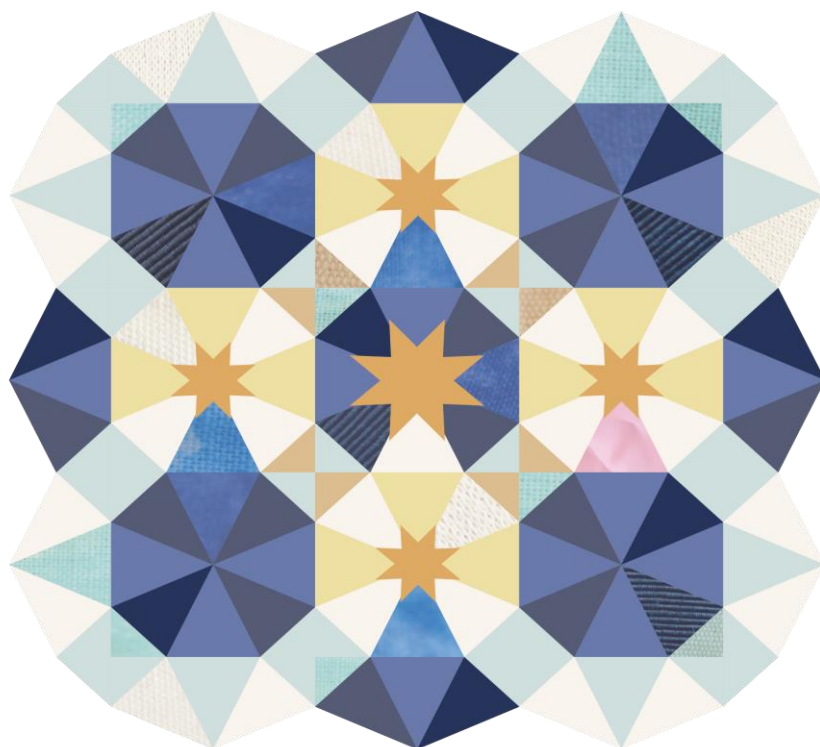


**THE**  
**Federated Church**  
**OF SYCAMORE**



**FOR THE BEGINNING**

ADVENT REMINDERS FOR NEW SEASONS

# **YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!**

## ***A warm WELCOME to those visiting or checking out Federated Church***

*We're glad you're here! Are you looking for more information about who we are, what we do, or how to get involved? Would you like to meet with Pastor Eric or get connected to others? Fill out our brief online [Connection Form here](#), and we will be in touch with you soon!*

### ***Federated Church is an Open & Affirming Community***

*In a time of deep division and vitriolic rhetoric around issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, and where the dignity of people living with disabilities or mental health issues are often ignored, demonized, or ridiculed, we promise to:*

*Welcome all people of every age, gender, race, national origin, faith expression, marital status & family structure, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, physical ability, mental or emotional condition, economic and social status, and educational background to share in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys of our church family.*

***The Rainbow Flag:*** *We proudly display a rainbow flag at the front of our sanctuary as a visual declaration of God's extravagant and inclusive love, as well as a reminder of our own "promise of welcome" to all people. Our prayer is that all can be their truest selves here. This flag serves as a particular signal that our church is a safe and affirming space for LGBTQ+ persons to be, to belong, to lead, to question, and to grow in faith.*

# Merry Christmas!

## Welcome to Christmas Eve Worship at Federated Church

### “Every Year”

*by Sarah Speed*

My heart and I have an agreement.  
Every year we show up here—  
here in the sanctuary,  
here with the candles and tall ceilings,  
here with the creaky church pews  
and the songs of silent nights.

My heart and I have an agreement.  
Every year we show up here—  
At the end of the year,  
After another 12 months of humanity, of me  
Trying to keep it all together,  
Trying to keep my head above water,  
Trying to keep up the appearances.

Every year we show up here.  
We drop it all. We leave it at the door.  
We come into this space, and I could swear it feels different.  
Maybe it's God. Maybe it's hope. Maybe it's love.  
But whatever it is, I need it every year, so we show up here.  
Tell us again the story of tonight.  
My heart needs it.

Dear Christmas worshippers,  
Welcome on this holiest of nights. Whatever has drawn you here, we're glad you've come. May Emmanuel—the “God-who-is-with-us”—meet you in this place and amidst whatever is ending or just beginning in your life as you enter once again into this sacred story. God's life-altering promises are for you. Love knows your name. May your soul feel its worth; may our weary world rejoice.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas,  
Pastor Eric

## **Order of Worship** | *December 24, 2024*

*All music can be found at the back of the bulletin.*

### **Prelude**

“O Holy Night”

*Peggy Safford, soloist*

### **Welcome & Presentation of Light**

On this holy night we gather to remember and proclaim  
How God did not wait until the world was ready, till nations were at peace;

**God came when the Heavens were unsteady,  
And prisoners cried out for release.**

God did not wait for the perfect time.

**God came when the need was deep and great.**

**God dined with sinners in all their grime,  
and turned water into wine.**

God did not wait until hearts were pure.

**In joy, God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.**

**To a world of anguished shame,**

**God came with love to share our grief and to touch our pain.**

**God came, and God’s light would not go out.**

*the Christ candle is lit. silence is kept.*

In the mystery of the Word made Flesh

The Maker of the Stars was born.

So, let us light candles to shine in every darkness:

**Wherever despair keeps watch, we will light candles of Hope.**

**Wherever fear crowds in, we will light candles of Peace.**

**Wherever grief overwhelms, we will light candles of Joy.**

**To inspire all our living, we will light candles of Love.**

**Sung Response** “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (*Refrain*)

***Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel***

**Gathering Carol** “O Come, All Ye Faithful” vv. 1, 2 & 4 (p. 5)

### **Christmas Prayer & The Lord’s Prayer**

**Our Father who art 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.**

**First Lesson** *The Witness of the Prophets*  
**Scripture** [Isaiah 9:2, 6-7; Micah 5:2-5a](#)  
**Poem** "Dominus Vobiscum"  
**Carol Response** "O Little Town of Bethlehem" vv. 1, 2 & 4 (p. 6)

**Second Lesson** *The Birth of Jesus*  
**Scripture** [Luke 2:1-7](#)  
**Poem** "A Song for the Poor at Christmas"  
**Carol Response** "Away in a Manger" vv. 1 & 2 (p. 7)

**Third Lesson** *An Angel Astounds the Shepherds with Good News*  
**Scripture** [Luke 2:8-14](#)  
**Poem** "Prepare Our Hearts"  
**Carol Response** "The First Noel" vv. 1 & 2 (p. 8)

**Fourth Lesson** *Shepherds & Magi Journey to the Manger*  
**Scripture** [Luke 2:15-20; Matthew 2:1-2, 7-12](#)  
**Poem** "Covenant"  
**Carol Response** "The First Noel" vv. 3 & 4 (p. 8)

**Meditation** "Love Knows Your Name"

**Musical Meditation**

**\*Responding to God's Invitation: Prayer Stations** (see insert for instructions)

**Sharing the Light of Christ**

**Scripture** [John 1:1-5, 9-14](#)  
**Poem** "Luminous Night"  
**Carol Response #4** "Silent Night"

*Please hold lit candles upright at all times  
Tip the unlit candle and light it from your neighbor's lit candle.  
See lyrics on the next page*

**Benediction**

**Postlude** "Silent Night" *arr. Mark Hayes*  
*Thank you for joining us for worship. Merry Christmas!*

## Silent 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, 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*

† † †

## WORSHIP NOTES

The Call to Worship is adapted from the poem, "First Coming," by Madeleine L'Engle and "I Will Light Candles this Christmas," a poem by Howard Thurman. All other poems used in worship come from *Upon a Luminous Night* by Christine Rodgers, except for the excerpt from "Prepare Our Hearts," which is written by Muriel Tarr Kurtz. All music and poems are used with permission. CCLI License #3234671

*Those serving us this evening are:*

**Pastor:** Rev. Eric J. Ogi | **Director of Music:** Gary Mattin

**Liturgists:** Sally Stevens and Sheldon Turner | **Ushers:**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Looking for a church home?** Join us for worship every Sunday at 10am in-person or on our Facebook Page—The Federated Church of Sycamore. To learn more about Federated Church, fill out a *yellow* "Connection Card" on the table near the sanctuary entryway or contact Pastor Eric ([reveric@fedsycamore.org](mailto:reveric@fedsycamore.org)). To receive our eNews and stay up to date on small groups, service opportunities, and other happenings contact Darlene, our Office Admin ([office@fedsycamore.org](mailto:office@fedsycamore.org)).

**December Love Offering** *Hope Haven's Night by Night Campaign*

Federated's goal is to raise \$1,000 for the *Night by Night* campaign in order to provide one night's shelter for 40 homeless individuals. A \$25 donation provides 3 meals, a warm bed for the night, and services for one homeless person. Donations in any amount may be placed in a Love Offering envelope at the "Table of Offering" prayer station or given online.

# O Come, All Ye Faithful *John Francis Wade*

1. O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful, and tri - um - phant,  
2. Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,  
3. Child, for us sin - ners poor and in the man - ger,  
4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born for our sal - va - tion,

O come ye, O come ye to Beth - le - hem;  
sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heaven a - bove!  
we would em - brace thee, with love and awe;  
Je - sus, to thee be all glo - ry given;

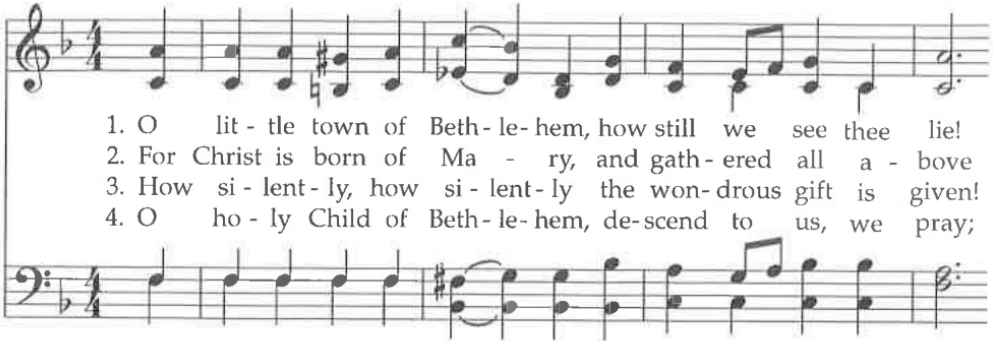
come and be - hold him, born the King of an - gels;  
Glo - ry to God, all glo - ry in the high - est;  
who would not love thee, lov - ing us so dear - ly?  
Word of the Fa - ther, now in flesh ap - pear - ing;

*Refrain*  
O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him,

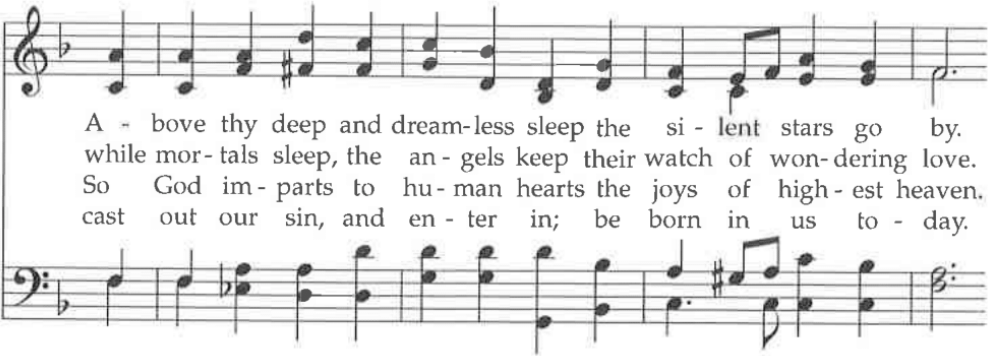
O come, let us a - dore him, Christ, the Lord!



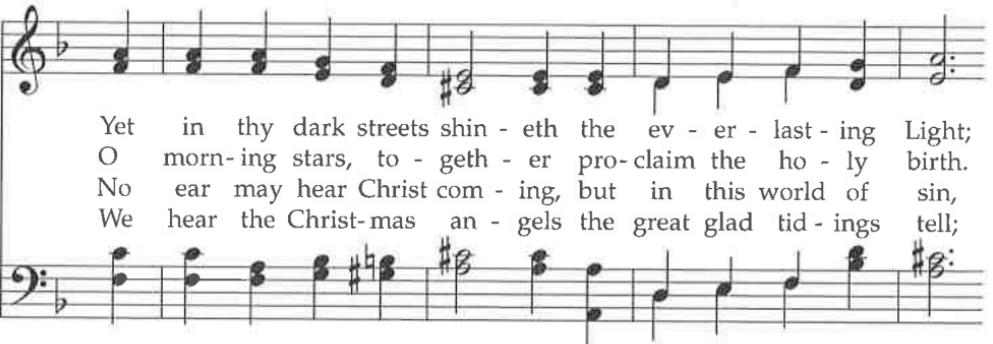
# O Little Town of Bethlehem *Phillips Brooks*



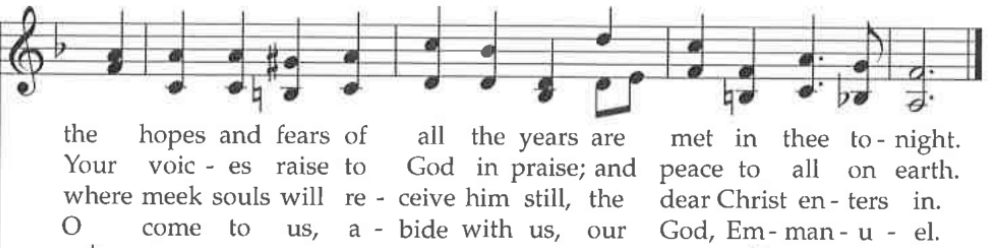
1. O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!  
2. For Christ is born of Ma - ry, and gath - ered all a - bove  
3. How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is given!  
4. O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;



A - bove thy deep and dream - less sleep the si - lent stars go by.  
while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - dering love.  
So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the joys of high - est heaven.  
cast out our sin, and en - ter in; be born in us to - day.



Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing Light;  
O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth.  
No ear may hear Christ com - ing, but in this world of sin,  
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;



the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.  
Your voic - es raise to God in praise; and peace to all on earth.  
where meek souls will re - ceive him still, the dear Christ en - ters in.  
O come to us, a - bide with us, our God, Em - man - u - el.



# Away in a Manger

*Unison*

1. A - way in a man-ger, no crib for a bed, the lit - tle Lord  
2. The cat - tle are low - ing, the ba - by a - wakes, but lit - tle Lord  
3. Be near me, Lord Je - sus, I ask thee to stay close by me for -

Je - sus laid down his sweet head. The stars in the sky looked  
Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes. I love thee, Lord Je - sus, look  
ev - er, and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear chil - dren in

down where he lay, the lit - tle Lord Je - sus, a - sleep on the hay.  
down from the sky, and stay by my cra - dle till morn - ing is nigh.  
thy ten - der care, and fit us for heav - en to live with thee there.

WORDS: Anonymous (19th century)  
MUSIC: Attr. James R. Murray, 1887; harm. LBW, 1978

AWAY IN A MANGER  
11 11.11 11

# The First Noel

1. The first No - el, the an - gel did say, was to  
 2. They look - ed up and saw a star shin - ing  
 3. And by the light of that same star three  
 4. This star drew nigh to the north - west, o'er  
 5. Then en - tered in those wise men three, full

1. cer - tain poor shep - herds in fields as they lay; in fields where  
 2. in the east, be - yond them far, and to the  
 3. wise men came from coun - try far; to seek for a  
 4. Beth - le - hem it took its rest, and there it  
 5. rev - erent - ly up - on their knee, and of - fered

1. they lay keep - ing their sheep, on a cold win - ter's  
 2. earth it gave great light, and so it con -  
 3. king was their in - tent, and to fol - low the  
 4. did both stop and stay, right ov - er the  
 5. there, in his pres - ence, their gold and

1. night that was so deep.  
 2. tin - ued both day and night.  
 3. star wher - ev - er it went. No - el, No - el, No -  
 4. place where Je - sus lay.  
 5. myrrh and frank - in - cense.

*Refrain*

el, No - el, born is the King of Is - ra - el.

# OUR FEDERATED VALUES

## **We believe in God**

At the center of our faith is the surprising, unsettling, and deeply personal God found in the Bible, most profoundly revealed in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. At Federated, our primary interest is not merely talking *about* God, but in *encountering* the Mysterious Force at the heart of the universe. This is a God who comforts us where we need to be comforted and challenges us where we've become complacent. This is a God who will not be confined to dogmatic teachings, nor even to the Bible. We believe that we are invited to encounter this God everywhere: in nature, science, one another, and in other religious traditions as well.

## **Each person is on a unique spiritual journey**

We value faith as a journey rather than a destination. We recognize that each person is at a different place on their journey, so we focus on “testimonies” of faith rather than “tests” of faith; stories of how we are being transformed, rather than dogmas we must affirm. Here, you are welcome to belong, question, explore, and lead whether you grew up in church and loved it, or you've had a painful relationship with Christianity; you are welcome whether you feel your faith is unshakeable or you're not sure if you believe in God at all. You are welcome to join a community of people “on the way”: encouraging and caring for one another, learning and growing together, and serving alongside each other as we build, in some small way, the world we believe God dreams of.

## **Building authentic community across our differences**

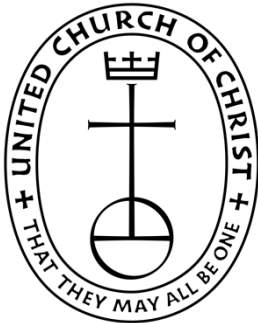
We are an “Open and Affirming” congregation, which is our way of saying that we value diversity. In a time of deep division, we believe it is paramount to gather people from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and identities in order to build authentic relationships and community. We believe that the simple but courageous work of showing up and being together in this way is one necessary element in healing our nation and world's deep divisions.

## **We believe in peace through justice**

In this congregation, conversations regarding racism, sexism, poverty, war, immigration, homophobia, hunger, abuse, and a host of other issues are commonplace, both from the pulpit and around the table. We know that the Realm of God is not being experienced on earth so long as people are being hurt. With Martin Luther King Jr., we believe that we are all “caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny,” and that “none of us can be free until all are free.” Which means that, as a community, we have a God-given responsibility and mission to work for justice and healing in our neighborhood and beyond. Jesus says: “I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). This work is defined not merely by what we are against, but the vision we are for—flourishing for *all!*

# ***“Welcoming Any, Loving All”***

*The Federated Church is affiliated with two national denominations:  
the United Church of Christ & the Unitarian Universalist Association*



Follow us on

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@FederatedChurchSycamore

[www.fedsycamore.org](http://www.fedsycamore.org)

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**Children's Church Coordinator:** Janis Schnurr-Trebe

**Federated Church Preschool, Director Bobbi Clough**

**Phone:** (815) 764-9473 || **Email:** [Preschool@fedsycamore.org](mailto:Preschool@fedsycamore.org)

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