

*Emmanuel United Church of Christ*  
*A Congregation of the United Church of Christ*

We Welcome you on this 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent  
December 24, 2023 - 9:30 AM  
Pastor Jim Cope and Pastor Jan Garinger



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**Ringing of the Church Tower Bell**

**Our Life Together**

**Prelude**

**The Solemn Declaration**

**Preparing our Hearts and Minds for Worship through Song**

**“O Little Town of Bethlehem”**

**O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!**

**Lighting of the Candle of LOVE**

**\*Call to Worship**

Leader: O come, early morning Mist: slowly moving over our lives to swaddle us in your peace, as we seek to walk through these moments.

**All: O come, gently falling Grace: calming us in this season that has gotten so out of control we cannot hear the angels sing, or see the shepherds pointing the way.**

Leader: O come, Walker with the winds: bring cooling peace to our over-heated fears of the future; knock us off our feet so we can make angels in the snow with all the kids around us.

**All: O come, Creator of the galaxies, so that as we gaze on them in the silence of holiness, our path to Bethlehem, as well as your heart, might be illuminated for us.**

Leader: O Come, Imagination beyond compare, as you gather us up with all of creation to dance with joy around the wonder of your love.

**All: O come to us, and live with us, this day and forever, Emmanuel. O come!**

**\*Opening Hymn “Hark! The Herold Angels Sing” #102 (RED)**

**Call to Confession**

**Our Prayer of Confession**

**We watch for packages to arrive and Christmas cards to be delivered, but we do not keep our eyes open for your coming, Approaching God. We expect our Christmas 'wish list' to be filled, and for the pile under the tree to grow and grow, but we hope you do not expect to transform our lives. We notice where to find the best bargains, and what decorations our neighbors have put on their houses, but we do not notice the little, the least, the lost, the last walking down our streets. Forgive us, Saving God, for our misplace priorities. May we watch for your coming, may we reach out to those in need, may we wait for hope to come, even as Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, arrives to live in our hearts.**

*(Silence is kept for personal reflection and prayer)*

**Assurance of Pardon**

Leader: The good news is made known to all people: Christ Jesus was born to save us from our sins.

**All: Glory and praise to the only wise God, who fills us with healing and hope. Amen.**

**\*Choral Response “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”**

**O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;**

**Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;**

**Fill the whole world with heaven’s peace.**

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

**\*Affirmation of Faith**

**We believe in God, the creator and giver of life, who brought all creation to birth, who mothers us and fathers us, protecting, nurturing, and cherishing us. We believe in Jesus Christ: God born among us as a fragile baby, embodying both love and the need for love, and calling us to rest in God as trustingly as a tiny child. We believe in the Holy Spirit, breathed into us at our birth, always drawing us on to be born again, encouraging, exhorting, comforting, nourishing our growth and inspiring our living. We believe in the reconciliation of the world to God, through Christ. Hunted at birth and humiliated at death, Christ entered our fearful darkness so that we might**

