

# UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church Of Christ



Loving God. Loving Neighbor. Building Community.

**January 4, 2026**  
**Second Sunday After Christmas**  
**Celebration of Epiphany**

\*Please rise in body or spirit.  
You are invited to join in the liturgy **in bold type**.

*Childcare is available on the first floor of this building for children ages 0-4. Children K-5th grade are invited to attend Sunday School after the Message For All Ages.*

*Please wear a name tag so we can greet one another by name  
(There are blank name tags in the back of the sanctuary).*

## **PRELUDE – Little Drummer Boy/Peace on Earth**

Words & Music: Alan Kohan, Larry Grossman, Ian Fraser, & Katherine Davis

*Come they told me  
A newborn king to see  
Our finest gifts we bring*

*Every child must be made aware  
Every child must be made to care  
Care enough for his fellow man  
To give all the love that he can*

*Peace on Earth can it be?  
Years from now, perhaps we'll see?  
See the day of glory  
See the day, when men of goodwill  
Live in peace, live in peace again  
Peace on Earth can it be?*

*I pray my wish will come true  
For my child and your child too  
He'll see the day of glory  
See the day when men of goodwill  
Live in peace, live in peace again  
Peace on Earth can it be?*

John David Whitener, Jeremy Whitener, & Jeremy Carlisle

## **WELCOME**

Rev. Katrina Forman

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Liturgist: We are searching for a star,

**People: It lights the way forward.**

Liturgist: We are searching for a star.

**People: It will point us towards God.**

Liturgist: We are searching for a star.

**People: Let us follow it as we seek to worship the Christ Child!**

**\*HYMN NCH #164 – Arise, Your Light is Come**

Words: Ruth Duck

*FESTAL SONG*

Music: William Walter

EPIPHANY

164

Arise, Your Light Is Come

*Isa. 60:1; 61:1-2; Luke 4:14-21*

*Ruth Duck, 1973*



1 A - rise, your light is come! The Spir - it's call o - bey;  
2 A - rise, your light is come! Fling wide the pris - on door;  
3 A - rise, your light is come! All you in sor - row born,  
4 A - rise, your light is come! The moun-tains burst in song!



Show forth the glo - ry of your God which shines on you to - day!  
Pro - claim the cap-tive's lib - er - ty, good tid - ings to the poor.  
Bind up the bro-ken - heart-ed ones and com - fort those who mourn.  
Rise up like ea - gles on the wing; God's power will make us strong.



*This hymn was first published by the Ecumenical Women's Center of Chicago in the 1974 collection of hymn adaptations, Because We Are One People. Ruth Duck later included it in her own collection, Dancing in the Universe.*

*Words Copyright © 1992 by G.I.A. Publications, Inc.*

Tune: *FESTAL SONG* S.M.  
*William Walter, 1872*

**PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION (unison)**

**God Who Lights Our Way, forgive us when we have not found our way to you. Forgive us when we stop looking for the stars and signs you put before us. Forgive us when we give up on the journey and become stagnant in our faith and lives. We want to create light for others. We want to deepen our connections to our communities and focus on hope and possibility. Shine brightly and help us to do the same. Amen.**

## ASSURANCE OF GRACE

## PASSING THE PEACE

### SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 2:1-12

Karen Ermler

## MESSAGE FOR ALL AGES

### SPECIAL MUSIC – The Work of Christmas

Words: Howard Thurman

Music: Dan Forrest

*When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among others,  
To make music in the heart.*

John David Whitener, Jeremy Whitener, & Jeremy Carlisle

## EPIPHANY REFLECTION

Rev. Katrina Forman

### \*HYMN NCH #150 – Sing a Different Song

Words: The Iona Community

*DIFFERENT SONG*

Music: John L. Bell

**(see next page)**

## CHRISTMAS

150

Isa. 9:2, 6-7; 42:10-11; Matt. 1:23

Vigorously

D

## Sing a Different Song

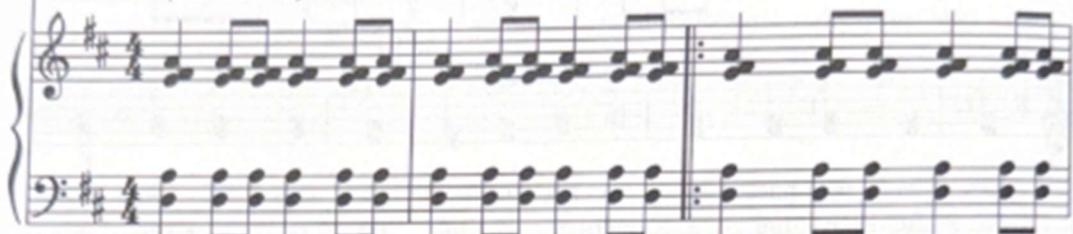
The Iona Community, 1987; alt.

D



- 1 Sing a dif-ferent song now
- 2 Shout a dif-ferent shout now
- 3 Love a dif-ferent love now
- 4 Dance a dif-ferent dance now

(Introduction)



Em7/D

D

Em7

A7



Christ-mas is here, sing a song of peo-ple know-ing God's  
 Christ-mas is here, shout a shout of joy and gen - u - ine  
 Christ-mas is here, love with-out con-di - tion, love with - out  
 Christ-mas is here, dance a dance of war on suf - fering and

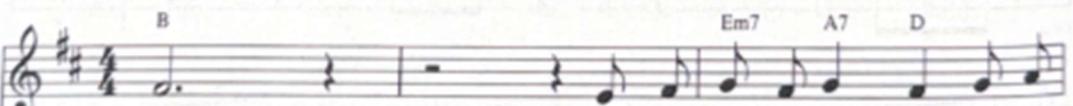


B

Em7

A7

D



near:

cheer:

fear:

fear:

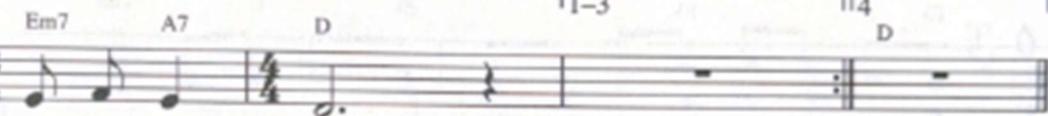
The Mes - si - ah is born in the  
 Fill the earth and the sky with the  
 With the hum - ble and poor, with the  
 Peace and jus - tice are one, in the



## CHRISTMAS



face of our scorn, sing a dif-ferent song to  
 news from on high, shout a dif-ferent shout that  
 shy and un - sure, love a dif-ferent love. Let  
 light of the sun. Dance a dif-ferent dance. God's



wel-come and warn. all may come by. Christ be the cure! reign has be gun!



*This lively new carol from The Iona Community of Scotland can be accompanied by drums and tambourines to enhance its dance-like quality. The text invites enthusiastic participation in celebrating the Christmas event.*

Tune: DIFFERENT SONG 10.10.6.6.10.  
 John L. Bell, 1987

## COMMUNION

### INVITATION

### SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

#### Lord's Prayer (unison)

Our {name for God}, 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

### WORDS OF INSTITUTION

### SHARING THE BREAD AND CUP

*We use gluten-free bread and grape juice. An usher will invite you forward to take a piece of bread and dip it in the juice. ALL are welcome at God's table, we mean it.*

*As you come forward to receive the elements, we also invite you to draw a star from the Table.*

#### COMMUNION HYMN (*insert*) – Eat This Bread

Arr. Jacques

Berthier



Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and  
nev - er be hun - gry. Eat this bread,  
drink this cup, trust in me and you will not thirst.

### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

### OFFERTORY

#### Music for Meditation – Sweeter the Bells Never Sound

arr. Schmidt

Jeremy Carlisle

#### \*Response of Thanksgiving – Doxology for Epiphany VENI EMMANUEL

Words: Thomas Ken, adapt. William B. Abernathy Music: Trad. French Tune

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow.**

**Praise God, all creatures here below.**

*Praise God for all that love has done.  
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

**\*Prayer of Dedication (unison)**

**Giving God, may these gifts reveal your greatness, generosity, and glory. We give thanks for the privilege of being in communal and covenantal care with our neighbors as manifested by the sharing of resources. Amen.**

**\*HYMN NCH #157 – Brightest and Best**

Words: Reginald Heber

*MORNING STAR*

Music: James P. Harding

**(see next page)**

## Brightest and Best

Reginald Heber, 1811; alt.

Matt. 2:9-11; Luke 2:10-14

1 Bright - est and best of the stars of the morn - ing,  
 2 Cold on the cra - dle the dew - drops are shin - ing,  
 3 Shall we not of - fer our cost - ly de - vo - tion,  
 4 Vain - ly we of - fer each am - pie ob - la - tion,

dawn on our mid - night and lend us your aid.  
 God's ho - ly Child with the beasts of the stall;  
 fra - grance of E - dom and of - ferings di - vine,  
 vain - ly with gifts would we fa - vor se - cure;

Star of the East the ho - ri - zon a - dom - ing,  
 An - gels a - dore while this ba - by lies sleep - ing,  
 Gems of the moun - tain and pearls of the o - cean,  
 Rich - er by far is the heart's ad - o - ra - tion,

guide where our in - fant Re - deem - er is laid.  
 Mak - er and Mon - arch and Sav - ior of all.  
 myrrh from the for - est or gold from the mine?  
 dear - er to God are the prayers of the poor.

An Anglican priest, Reginald Heber became bishop of Calcutta (including all of India), where he died of exhaustion at age forty-three. His Hymns (1827) was the first modern English hymnal arranged according to the church year.

Tune: MORNING STAR 11.10.11.10.

James P. Harding, 1892

The New Psalms and Hymns, Richmond, Va., 1901

Alternate setting: WALKER

## \*BENEDICTION

### \*CHORAL BENEDICTION - Go in Peace, Beloved

Words: Anon.

CRANHAM

Music: Gustav Holst

*Go in peace, Beloved. God be with you all.  
Wait for grace with patience, as for rains that fall.  
Go and share God's blessing. Be a sign of hope:  
Bear the love of Jesus, love to one and all.*

## POSTLUDE

Jeremy Carlisle

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This liturgy was written by Rev. Holly Jackson.

## ABOUT THE STAR WORDS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

The use of star words, also called "star gifts," is a prayer practice connected to Epiphany and the New Year that has been growing in popularity in Protestant churches for nearly a decade now. The idea is that a list of intention words, or guiding words, are written or printed on paper stars and congregants are given a word without looking for reflection and intention for the year.

### What's the theological connection?

- The Magi followed a star, which ultimately led them to Jesus. Therefore, we too use all the resources we have available to us—including creative prayer practices and intention words for the new year—to move closer to Jesus.
- We trust that God uses multiple ways to guide us and speak to us. Star words are one such lens that might provide us a way to look for God in our midst, both actively and in hindsight.
- We trust that it is often easy to miss God in our daily midst. Having an intention word to consider both in present days, as well as to reflect on at the end of the year, allows for us to see God in ways we may not have seen God before. This is the greatest gift.
- We know that the most common prayer practice for many involves speaking to God as opposed to silence or contemplation. We believe that star words

invite a new prayer rhythm of reflection and review that can be a powerful new way to connect with God.

- By not looking or sorting through the star words at their selection, we practice the spiritual task of receiving. It is not we who are in control in this moment. Instead, we trust that God is present, and we let go of our desire to cultivate or control.

**THANK YOU** for joining us for worship this morning. Please sign a welcome card if you are visiting and put it in the offering plate. Please stay for coffee hour in the Assembly Room immediately following the service.

**THANK YOU** to the Sunday Welcome Team, the Communion Servers, Jeremy Carlisle. And John David and Jeremy Whitener.

**THANKS** to Della Smith for the ceremonial loaf, and Michele Sionas for the gluten-free/nut free bread.

**LIVESTREAM VIDEO:** Nkenge Jones      **SOUND OPERATOR:** Joe Cristiani

**SMALL GROUPS RESUME THIS WEEK**

***Tuesday, January 6th***

12:30pm Daytime Bible Study (Guild Room)

***Wednesday, January 7th***

10:30am Gentle Yoga "Slow-ga" (Guild Room or Zoom)

Noon Union Sages (Guild Room)

***Friday, January 9th***

6:15pm BYO Dinner; 7pm Screening "Red River" (Guild Room)

**2025 CHRISTMAS OFFERING WRAPPING UP**

We are celebrating Christmas traditions from around the world in our worship series, "One Christ, Many Cultures." In that spirit, we invite you to offer some tangible support to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank this Christmas as we pray for the fragile ceasefire to grow into a just, lasting peace. Our Christmas offering will go to Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, and to Roots Of Resilience, a local organization that supports farmers in the West Bank.

You can donate to the Christmas Offering by using a Christmas Offering envelope in the pew and putting it in the offering plate or mailing the envelope to the church office. You can donate online using the donate/pay button on the church website or by scanning the QR code. If you donate online, be sure to select "Christmas Offering" as your donation's purpose.

**SCAN ME**



## **From The UCC Players: Join the Cast of a One Evening Reading of Shakespeare on Saturday, January 24th**

Got an acting bug but not much time? Want to share your performing talents and benefit one of UCC's longest-standing groups? UCC Players will be hosting a one-night fundraiser on Saturday, Jan. 24th, 2026, and we want to involve as many of our UCC community as possible. Our goal is to raise funds so we can replace our antiquated, energy-wasting lights with more modern, energy-efficient LED lights. The evening will be called: "*List, List, O List: An Evening of Shakespeare's Soliloquies, Sonnets, Songs and Scenes*". We'll be reading and singing from scripts so no memorization needed! We have material you can choose from and UCC Players who will act as coaches/directors. We will have only one full group rehearsal, on Friday, January 23rd. Email Carlos (crvdapena@gmail.com) if you are interested.

## **Sign Up For The All Church Winter Fun Day At Johnsonburg Camp And Retreat Center (February 1, 2026 from 1pm-6pm)**

Let's play! We've discovered a great new partner, Johnsonburg Camp and Retreat Center, where we can gather in a "Sacred Place/Open Space" to build community, connect with creation, grow spiritually, and play together. We're excited about possibilities for All Church Fun Days, youth retreats, and summer camp opportunities for our children, youth and adults. There will be opportunities for hiking, football, zip-lining, bonfire, and sledding (if there is snow), as well as an all-day hot chocolate bar and breakfast for dinner. Come have some fun with our church family.

(Cost: Ages 6-Adult - \$25; Ages 0-5 – Free). Go to <https://www.campjburg.org/> and click *Register Now* to set up an account and register for the February 1 Winter Fun Day. Call the church office and talk to Kim if you need help registering.

### **For pastoral care needs, please contact:**

January 2<sup>nd</sup> - January 10<sup>th</sup>

Rev. Katrina at 973-417-3409 / [KForman@unioncong.org](mailto:KForman@unioncong.org)

**CHURCH CONTACT INFO: Church Office: 973-744-7424**

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Rev. Leah McCullough, Minister of Pastoral Care and Faith Formation,  
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Jon Thomsen, Executive Director, 973-744-7426, [jthomsen@unioncong.org](mailto:jthomsen@unioncong.org)

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Jeremy Whitener, Co-Director of Music, [jeremy@unioncong.org](mailto:jeremy@unioncong.org)

**Union Congregational Church, United Church of Christ  
An LGBTQ+ Open and Affirming Congregation**

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