

# Lakewood Congregational Church

*A Congregation of the United Church of Christ*

Sunday, December 24, 2021, 5:00 pm



An Order of Worship to be followed in your home,  
along with our worship video.

## Welcome and Announcements

If you are new among us, welcome. Please know we are glad you're here, whether in person with us in the Sanctuary or in remote community via our livestream.

At Lakewood Congregational Church, we strive to be people of extravagant welcome. Whether you are young or old, gay or straight, single or partnered, happy or sad, confused or inspired, street smart or college-educated, whether you can't pay your bills or you have more than enough to share—no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here in this place, to worship a loving God who welcomes us all. As I stand in this sanctuary I join my heart with you and I pray that you might feel the refuge of this space.

May the Peace of Christ be with you. Let us worship God.

[Carol Hymnal](#)

## Prelude

arr. Sufjan Stevens

*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

Next Generation Band

Edie Barcelona, piano/vocals

Joe Daso, bells/vocals

Bridget Katzenberger, sleigh bells/vocals

Bri Raynes, ukulele/vocals

## **Christmas Proclamation**

Rev. Joanna D'Agostino

The words of the Rev. Quinn Caldwell:

*If you came to this place expecting a tame story, you came to the wrong place.*

*If you came for a story that does not threaten you, you came for a different story than the one we tell.*

*If you came to hear of the coming of a God who only showed up so that you could have a nice day with your loved ones, then you came for a God whom we do not worship here.*

*For even a regular baby is not a tame thing. And goodness that cannot threaten complacency and evil is not much good at all. And a God who would choose to give up power and invincibility to become an infant for you, certainly didn't do it just so you could have dinner.*

*But.*

*If you came because you think that unwed teenage mothers are some of the strongest people in the world.*

*If you came because you think that the kind of people who work third shift doing stuff you'd rather not do might attract an angel's attention before you, snoring comfortably in your bed, would.*

*If you came because you think there are wise men and women to be found among undocumented travelers from far lands and that they might be able to show you God.*

*If you came to hear a story of tyrants trembling while heaven comes to peasants.*

*If you came because you believe that God loves the animals as much as the people and so made them the first witnesses to the saving of the world.*

*If you came for a story of reversals that might end up reversing you.*

*If you came for a tale of adventure and bravery where strong and gentle people win, and the powerful and violent go down to dust, where the rich lose their money but find their lives and the poor are raised up like kings.*

*If you came to be reminded that God loves you too much to leave you unchanged.*

*If you came to follow the light even if it blinds you.*

*If you came for salvation and not safety, then ah, my friends, you are in precisely the right place.*

## **Carol**

# 148

*O Come, All Ye Faithful (3 vs.)*

## **Prayer of Invocation**

**Holy One, bless our time together tonight. Our gathering is to your glory: in our church building or in our homes, traveling or quarantined, working or recovering or watching later.**

**Together, we remember the still-unfolding story of your love:**

**A love that comes to dwell among us.**

**A love that surprises and disrupts.**

**A love that reveals the way of liberation.**

**May it be so among us.**

**Amen.**

## **First Reading**

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Long before Jesus came, the people of Israel were suffering in slavery and they wondered if they would ever get back to their homeland. They dreamed of someone who could save them. The

Prophet Isaiah spoke these hopeful words, which set the scene for us tonight.

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.  
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.  
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.

### Special Music

Monica Scott

#### *Prince of Peace*

Pre-K thru 5th Grade Faith Formation Children  
Edie Barcelona, piano;  
Teegan Barlow, Evelyn D'Agostino, Suzie D'Agostino,  
Avery Spahr, soloists

### Lighting of the Advent Candles

Tiny and vulnerable, cute and wise, by the labor of a mother and the grace of God, Jesus came into the world. The Creator of the Universe slipped into our midst. The Lord of Heaven and Earth sat down beside us. The Immortal God entered human life.

In this birth, we recognized God. That baby looked like us. As that baby grew, God's heart would absorb all the hardship and hate of the world and transform it into hope; all the pain and peril of the world, and transform it into peace; all the sorrow and suffering of the world, and transform it into joy; all the inhumanity and injustice of the world, and transform it into love.

So let us light candles.

**All: Candles of joy, despite all sadness,  
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch.  
Candles of courage for fears ever present,  
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,  
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens.  
Candles of love to inspire all our living,  
Candles that will burn all the year long.**

-Howard Thurman

### Second Reading

Micah 5:2-5a

As for you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
though you are the least significant of Judah's forces,  
one who is to be a ruler in Israel on my behalf will come out  
from you.  
His origin is from remote times, from ancient days.  
Therefore, he will give them up  
until the time when she who is in labor gives birth.  
The rest of his kin will return to the people of Israel.  
He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord,  
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.  
They will dwell secure,  
because he will surely become great throughout the earth;  
he will become one of peace.

## Carol

# 144

*O Little Town of Bethlehem (2 vs.)*

### Third Reading

Luke 1:26-38

One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee with a message for a maid named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. The angel greeted Mary and said, “You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you.”

Mary was confused by the angel’s words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary, “Don’t be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end.”

Mary asked the angel, “How can this happen? I am not married!” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God’s power will come over you. So, your child will be called the holy Son of God. Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. Nothing is impossible for God!”

Mary said, “I am the Lord’s servant! Let it happen as you have said.” And the angel left her.

### Special Music

arr. Steven Page and Ed Robertson

*God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen/We Three Kings*

Next Generation Band

Eddie Barcelona, piano/vocals

Joe Daso, drums; Bridget Katzenberger, cello;

Bri Raynes, vocals

## Sharing of Gifts (Offering)

### Offertory Prayer

Gracious God, bless these gifts, that we might use them to be a blessing to others. On this Holy Night, care for us as you cared for Mary, that we might serve you as she did, bearing God’s grace into the world. Amen.

### Fourth Reading

Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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.

## Carol

# 162

*What Child is This? (2 vs.)*

### Fifth Reading

Luke 2:8-20

Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord’s angel stood before them, the Lord’s glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

The angel said, “Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, “Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.”

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go right now to Bethlehem and see what’s happened. Let’s confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.” They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

**Carol** # 150  
*Hark! the Herald Angels Sing (2 vs.)*

**Christmas Eve Message** Rev. Joanna D’Agostino

**Sixth Reading** John 1:1-14  
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word was present from the beginning with God. Through the Word all things came into being and apart from the Word none of this would be here. The Word was filled with life and light. The life was the light of all people: a light that transforms shadows and can never be overcome.

**Special Music** Adolphe Adam  
*O Holy Night*  
Evelyn Richards, vocals  
Ben Malkevitch, piano

## **Lighting of the Christ Candle**

Tiny and vulnerable, cute and wise, by the labor of a mother and the grace of God, Jesus came into the world. The movement he began continues to this day, and we are part of it: a movement of light that transforms shadows and can never be overcome.

Together, our small candles symbolize the bright flame of Christ’s light in the world. May we be both witnesses and bearers of this light tonight and every night after.

## **The Service of Candlelight**

*It is our long-standing tradition to take the light from the Christ candle and spread it to the candles we each hold while we sing Silent Night. If you are at home tonight, we ask you to find a candle in your house to light and hold with us. By God’s Grace, the light we share in our sanctuary connects with the light you share at home.*

*When it comes time to extinguish your candles at the end of our hymn, please don’t blow out your candle. Instead, use the small glass communion cup you will find in your pew as a snuffer.*

**Carol** # 145  
*Silent Night, Holy Night (3 vs.)*

**Benediction** Howard Thurman

**Carol** # 143  
*Joy to the World (3 vs.)*

**Postlude** Jason Payne  
*Postlude on “Gloria”*  
Ben Malkevitch, organ

## **Offering and Contribution Collection**

Please consider fulfilling your pledges during this time. Financial gifts are always welcome, and our church feels the call to respond to the needs around us as they arise. Financial stability allows us to do so more effectively. So, let us give generously of our time, talent, treasure to further the work of God in our community. You can do so in the following ways:

- Writing and mailing a check to Lakewood Congregational Church, 1375 W. Clifton Blvd., Lakewood, OH 44107
- Texting STEWARD to 44-321
- Sending a gift through your bank's online bill pay
- By using the donate button on the church's website [www.lcc-church.org](http://www.lcc-church.org)
- Call the church office at (216) 221-9555 to discuss other options

***Our Mission Statement proclaims our common goal.***

*We strive to be a welcoming,  
worshipping community of faith,  
helping people discover and deepen  
their relationship with God, growing as  
disciples of Christ, and reaching out in  
faith and loving service.*

***In keeping with the spirit of our Mission Statement,***

*Lakewood Congregational Church,*

*United Church of Christ,*

*is an Open and Affirming congregation.*

*We welcome people of all sexual orientation,  
ages, differing abilities, and ethnic, economic,  
and racial backgrounds into*

*the full life and ministry of our church.*

*We declare this in the name of the Still Speaking God,  
whose Son, Jesus Christ, welcomed  
all people into God's circle of grace.*