

Lakewood Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation

1375 West Clifton Boulevard, Lakewood, OH



Christmas Eve Service

December 24, 2023 · 9:00 PM

Welcome and Announcements

If you are new among us, welcome. Please know we are glad you're here; you're welcome in our remote community and you're welcome in our physical community when the time is right.

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.

Prelude

Silent Night

Jesse Bobbitt, Noah Hamrick, Michael Komperda, Liz Spahr

Christmas Proclamation

Rev. Joanna D'Agostino

Advent Candle Lighting

Susan Wagner and Doug Nyland

- A: How does a weary world hold onto hope, practice peace, spread joy, or know love? How does a weary world combat cruelty? How does a weary world shine a light into our bleakest night?
- B: We do all these things with God's help. For tonight, a child is born in Bethlehem. Tonight, Christ draws near. Tonight, we light the Christ Candle. Tonight, we are not alone.
- A: God is near. Love has drawn close. Rejoice! For God loves this weary world. Amen.

* Carol

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O Come, All Ye Faithful (verses 1,2,4)

* Prayer of Invocation

Loving God, we have heard this story before— the story of a star in the sky and a baby who was laid in a manger. We have heard this story before— passed down in hopeful whispers through the generations. Tonight, make room in our souls to hear this story again. Make room in us for awe. Make room in us for wonder. Make room for heartache and compassion. Make room in our hearts for the birth of Christ, as if it were the first time. Amen.

First Reading

Isaiah 9:2-7

Liz Spahr

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.
You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
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 onwards and for evermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Special Music

Shepherd's Pipe Carol

LCC Chancel Choir

Cathy Spicer, flute

Second Reading

Micah 5:2-5a

Julie Warren

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.
Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labour has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.
And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;
and he shall be the one of peace.

Carol

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O Little Town of Bethlehem (vs. 1 and 2]

Third Reading

Luke 1:26-38

Cathy Spicer

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your

womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.’ Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.

Special Music

Mary Had a Baby
Audrey and Lindy Warren, vocals
Michael Komperda, clarinet
Judy Fesko, piano

Invitation to Offering

Sharing our Gifts

Offertory

arr. Linda R. Lamb

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly
Judy Fesko, piano

Prayer of Dedication (in unison)

Loving God, may these offerings bring hope, peace, love, and joy to others who seek a better life for themselves. Use our gifts to do justice in a world of neglect and indifference. May the coming of the Christ Child inspire others to give abundantly. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Fourth Reading

Luke 2:1-7

Nate McLaughlin

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

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What Child is This? (2 verses)

Fifth Reading

Luke 2:8-20

Patti Komperda

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!’

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

* Carol

#150

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (vs.1 and 3)

Christmas Eve Message

Rev. Joanna D'Agostino

We Make Room

Sixth Reading

John 1:1-14

Mad McLaughlin

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Special Music

A Father's Love, A Perfect Rose

Noah Hamrick, soloist

LCC Chancel Choir

Lighting of the Christ Candle

One: 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.

All: 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

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Silent Night, Holy Night

* Benediction

Rev. Joanna D'Agostino

* Carol

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Joy to the World

Postlude

Our Mission Statement proclaims our common goal.

*We strive to be a welcoming,
worshiping 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. Wherever you are on life's journey, we welcome you and all people of every sexual orientation, age, ability, gender identity and expression, and ethnic, economic, and racial background into the full life and ministry of our church. We declare this in the everlasting grace of the Still-Speaking God.

Offering and Contribution Collection

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, and 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
- Call the church office at (216) 221-9555 to discuss other options