

Sundays, December 4, 11, and 18 at 8am and 10:30am

Friday, December 23 at 7pm, Christmas Eve Worship Candlelight and Communion

Saturday, December 24, Christmas Eve Worship

3pm Candlelight and Communion

5pm Children's Choir, No Communion

8pm Candlelight and Communion

Sunday, December 25 Christmas Day No 8am Worship, Only 10:30am Worship

Sunday, January 1 New Year's Day No 8am Worship, Only 10:30am Worship

Sunday, January 8 8am and 10:30am Worship with Communion, Young Adult Sunday

Pick up a copy of the book *Everything Is Sacred* for inspirational daily readings.

Copies are in the lobby on Sundays or in the bin on the South side entrance during the week.

Sunday, December 25th, 2022
10:30am Worship
Christmas Day: Surprisingly Sacred

GUESTS, Welcome to our faith community here at Union UCC. To learn more about us please visit our website at www.unionucc.org or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/unionneffs.

Please complete the Welcome Card in the racks in front of you and hand it in with your offering or give it to a pastor. This is a good way to let us know you're here.

One of our core values as a church is extravagant welcome and hospitality. We believe in God's inclusive love. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Sound: Dawn Dengler

***Please stand in body or spirit.**

Reflecting the Sacred

The shiny additions to our Advent and Christmas visuals remind us that we are called to reflect the sacred each and every day. "Incarnation" is a word that means that God's presence came to dwell among all people, and we believe this happened in a special way in the birth of Jesus. All creation has always been imbued with the Creator's brilliance. This season, we will remember the call to shine with this holy light.

Welcome

Crossing the Threshold

Leader: If you have ever been involved in a situation where a child was born, you know that the day after can be exhilarating but also energetically low. A lot of energy was expended, and now what sinks in is thoughts of "the rest of your life" or at least the next few months of giving yourself totally to this little being who is completely dependent upon you for all it needs. There is crying (baby and you, perhaps), but the anticipation bubble is burst, and now the task is figuring out how it is to "be" in this new state. This is also how it is no matter what new creative moment has happened. Birthing can also mean changing jobs, or moving, or starting in a new school, or a shift in a relationship, or a loss you weren't expecting. It seems that—like that day after a newborn enters the world—joy and hard work, wonder and fear, seem to go together.

So I invite you today, in the midst of your traditions and any and all of the emotions that you are feeling right now, to get comfortable where you are sitting. Close your weary eyes for just a moment (yes, you may have gotten up really early this morning if you are in a

household with children), and allow a vision of light to cascade over you, anointing all that you are feeling as reflecting the sacred. Know that you are not alone. Take a deep, intentional breath in and out. That's it. Take time to settle in. Continue to just breathe, listen, and see with your heart.

Take one more deep breath and open your eyes slowly.

Readers:

Please repeat after me [us]:

We pray for comfort this day
We pray for comfort this day.

We open to see the Sacred reflected in all things.
We open to see the Sacred reflected in all things.

We open to see each thing that is born
We open to see each thing that is born

as a gift of holy presence.
as a gift of holy presence.

This is the gift of the Christ Mystery,
This is the gift of the Christ Mystery,

lighting the way to calm.
lighting the way to calm.

Prayer

Living God, Christ Mystery, Spirit of Calm,
we give you thanks for this physical and online space
for gathering.

As we take in the comfort you offer,
may we be a reflection of your light,
expanding the sacred sense of surprise

into the sacred sacred sense of purpose.

Amen.

Sharing God's Light

Leader: One of our core values as God's church here in Neffs is extravagant welcome.

So repeat after me - No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey,

ALL: No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey,

Leader: you are welcome here.

ALL: You are welcome here.

Leader: Please stand in body or spirit to greet each other and to share God's light with one another.

We send our love and light to those watching and listening at home or during the week.

***Opening Hymn #171 Joy To the World! (Gold Hymnal/ Hymns for the Family of God)**

**1. Joy to the world! The lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing, And heaven and nature
sing, And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.**

**2. Joy to the world! The savior reigns;
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**3. No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.**

Please be seated.

Introduction to Scripture

Reader: In the early church, Sunday was known as the “day of light.” And so it is special when Christmas falls on a Sunday, as it does in 2022. As light dawns on this morning, as the children scramble to the tree to see what has appeared, we remember that the sacred comes in the form of surprise sometimes, just as it did when light and life was known anew in the form of a baby in a humble stable. Can we dare to believe that we can know a surprising calm even in the midst of anxiety because of the in-breaking of this Prince of Peace upon our lives each and every day? Hear this first reading:

First Reading

Isaiah 52: 7-10 (NRSVUE)

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces
peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices;
together they shout for joy,
for in plain sight they see
the return of the Lord to Zion.
Break forth; shout together for joy,
you ruins of Jerusalem,
for the Lord has comforted his people;
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

The Lord has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

Second Reading

John 1: 1-14 (NRSVUE)

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 overtake 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.

The Message

Surprisingly Sacred Pastor Kris

Hymn: #205 Go, Tell It on the Mountains (Gold Hymnal, Hymns for the Family of God)

Go tell it on the mountains, Over the hills and everywhere; Go tell it on the mountains That Jesus Christ

is born!

**1. While shepherds kept their watching
O'er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens
There shone a holy light.**

**Go tell it on the mountains, Over the hills and everywhere;
Go tell it on the mountains That Jesus Christ is born!**

**2. The shepherds feared and trembled
When lo! Above the earth
Ran out the angel chorus
That hailed our Savior's birth.**

**Go tell it on the mountains, Over the hills and everywhere;
Go tell it on the mountains That Jesus Christ is born!**

**3. Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born,
And brought us God's salvation
That blessed Christmas morn.**

**Go tell it on the mountains, Over the hills and everywhere;
Go tell it on the mountains That Jesus Christ is born!**

Refilling the Sacred

Leader: We are wells of the sacred. God's presence is poured into creation in a never-ending flow of love. We enter a time of prayer that invites us to be refilled in ways that can help us pour out our love throughout the week. All we must do in this moment is open our hearts to the Holy One.

Prayers Emmanuel, Emmanuel Bob McGee

Em - man - u - el, Em - man - u - el,
5 His Name is Called Em - man - u - el;
9 God with us, re - vealed in us;
13 His name is called Em - man - u - el.

**ALL: (Spoken) Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise.
(St. Patrick's Prayer)**

Repeat ALL Singing: Emmanuel, Emmanuel

The LORD'S PRAYER

**ALL: Our Father, 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 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.**

News about the Ministry and Mission of God's Church

Offering Prayer

Prayer

God of birthing new life into the world and our lives, we bring our gifts to you and to this church and community: gifts of heart, spirit, energy, love, time, resources, dreams, hopes, passion, compassion, meaning and purpose, and faith. We come to the manger and we bow, asking for your guidance and blessing on these gifts and on us. Deepen our commitment to you and to each other. Pour your light on these gifts, on us, and on your church and all people we pray. Amen.

Offering

Thank you for the many ways in which you support God's work and God's people.

CHRISTMAS MISSION OFFERING

Please share your financial support by using the Christmas Mission Offering envelope in your envelope packet, or blank envelope marked - Christmas Mission, or donate online at <http://www.unionucc.org/resources/giving-and-sponsorship/ways-to-give/ChristmasMission>.

The Allentown Rescue Mission For more than a century, the Allentown Rescue Mission has addressed the changing face of homelessness, tackling the root causes of homelessness, and helping to end homelessness one life at a time throughout the Lehigh Valley. Thousands have come to their shelter receiving life changing help. Their shelter has been a place where men have begun to experience restoration.

The Laurel House is part of the Thistle Farms and Bloom community which provides sanctuary and a continuum of care to heal, empower, and employ women survivors of sex trafficking. This new location in Allentown will support pregnant survivors with 2 years of safety while they heal, deliver their child, attend parenting classes, and receive mentoring and vocational training in order to live independently.

Donate to God's Mission and Ministry at UNION UCC

OFFERING ENVELOPES. If you can't attend worship, you can mail your envelopes to the church. The church address is on one side, just add a stamp.

ELECTRONIC GIVING. Choose to give a repetitive contribution on a regular basis (i.e weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly), or make single contributions whenever you desire in an amount of your choice. Electronic contributions are initiated from Union UCC's website (UnionUCC.org). Click on 'giving', then on 'Ways to Give' and follow the prompts. Feel free to contact John Harting (610-799-2508) or Don Penrod (610-398-2654) to answer your questions or demonstrate the process.

MOBILE GIVING. If you would like to give on the go, Vanco, the company that processes our e-giving transactions, has a mobile app that allows you to do so. Open your app search screen, search under "Vanco Mobile Faith \Engagement" and follow the prompts.

AMAZON SMILE. Donate to Union UCC, Neffs (Search by zip code 18065) while you shop <https://smile.amazon.com>

MUSIC OFFERING

Folk Carol Suite I. Noel Nouvelet Traditional French Carol II.
Masters in This Hall Traditional French Carol III. Coventry
Carol Traditional English Carol

Payge Haydt, Viola

***Offering Response**

Please stand in body or spirit.

(Sung to the tune of "What Child Is This")

Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Praise God all creatures here below

Praise God all heavens and the earth

reflecting the sacred story.

**This, this is Christ the One
who mirrors hope for all of us.
Haste, haste to bring him laud,
the Word of time eternal.**

Reframing the Sacred

Leader: We too often think that something "sacred" is far away and not available to us. This Advent season, we are "reframing" the way we recognize the sacred reflected all around and through us. As we prepare to move into the world, we begin to reframe our view of the world and our circumstances, illuminating new ways of being the Christ (Anointed One) tangibly present.

Anointed to the Surprisingly Sacred

This morning, I invite you to "Christify" your meal, your gifts, and each other simply by making up a "sparkly" hand blessings (like fingers wiggling toward something) on the things in your home, your gathering, under your tree, the

people around, and say “you are actually not surprisingly sacred to me... I’ve known all along that you are a gift.”

Benediction

Leader: When you see lights twinkle,
when you catch a reflection in a mirror,
when you notice the sunlight dancing on a surface
or a nightlight glowing in the darkness,
let these be signs that the Christ Light is revealed
again and again in and through this world.

Know that your brilliant presence
is pouring more hope into a weary world.
God loved us by becoming us.
This means you are already
reflecting the sacred.

In the name of the Creator, Christ, and Spirit of Hope.
Amen.

Please stand.

***Closing Hymn** #192 Angels We Have Heard on High
(Gold Hymnal/Hymns for the Family of God)

**1. Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o’er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echo back their joyous strains.**

**Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

**2. Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be,
Which inspire your heavenly song?**

**Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

**3. Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come adore, on bended knee,
Christ , the Lord, the newborn King.**

**Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

EVIDENCE OF STEWARDSHIP LAST SUNDAY

Offering (e-giving, envelopes, and plate)	
Last Week	
Calendar Year 2022 (Jan-Oct.)	\$ 309,414.00
Calendar Year 2021 (Jan-Oct.)	\$ 302,292.00
Change from Last Year	2.4%
Budget FY 2022 (July 2022 - June 23)	\$ 131,000.00
Actual Fiscal Year-to-Date (July 2022-June 23)	\$ 112,648.00
Difference in Giving vs. Budget	-14.0%
<i>Additional financial information available in Consistory Minutes</i>	

Attendance Last Week		
	In person	Online
8:00 am	48	
10:30 am	129	
Education Hour	32	

2022 Donations to the Northern Lehigh Food Bank:	
Last Week:	bs, \$
Total YTD:	5,989 lbs, \$880

Presentations to the Glory of God

Spread the Good News :

Merry Christmas! from Pastor Kris

Be a sponsor for \$20, send to Union UCC through your offering envelope or online marked Spread the Good News or \$8 for Children's Bulletin. Contact Marissa to sign up for a certain date or to sponsor in honor or memory of someone.

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