**Community Congregational Church of Clinton Heights, UCC**

**December 24, 2022**

**Rev. Kathy Johnson**

**Kathy: Welcome to the Community Congregational Church of Clifton Heights this Christmas Eve. No matter where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here! If you are at home and have an Advent wreath, please have it available along with your matches. Also, near the end of the service, we will be lighting a single candle while singing our last hymn. If you want to join us, you may also get another single candle now.**

Tina, Call to Worship, from Touch Holiness, Ruth C. Duck

One: **First, we light the candles on our Advent Wreath. We light the candle of Peace.**

**ALL: Let there be light!**

One: **We light the candle of Hope.**

**ALL: Let there be light!**

One: **We light the candle of Joy.**

**ALL: Let there be light!**

**One: We light the candle of Love.**

**ALL: Let there be light!**

**One: Tonight, we light the central candle, reminding us that Christ is the light of the world, the center of our lives, the shining beacon of hope for all the universe.**

**All: Christ is born. Praise God! Amen.**

**Kathy: Opening Prayer: O Holy God, thank you that the time of waiting and preparing is over and that the light of Christ shines so very clearly tonight. May our joy be full and our hearts rejoice for the world shall never be the same again. Truth and justice and righteousness have come to free all from the bondage of sin. Thank you, God, for this holy night of nights! Amen.**

Hymn: “O Come All Ye Faithful”, 148

**The First Lesson** Luke 1: 26-38 Tom Poole

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, favored 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 favor 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 forever, 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.

 Hymn: O Holy Night

**The Second Lesson** Luke 2: 1-14 Bill

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.

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 Savior, 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 favors!”

 “Away in a Manger”, 147

**The Third Lesson** Luke 2: 15-20 Bruce

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.

Hymn: Hark the Herald Angels Sing, 150

**The Fourth Lesson** Matthew 2: 1-5, 7-11 Tina

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Hymn: O, Little Town of Bethlehem, 144

**Message, “ From the Darkness into Light”**

**Silent prayer for ourselves and others, Lord’s Prayer (using debts and debtors)**

**Offering**

**Doxology**

Turn off lights and light candles. Tina and I light from Advent wreath then walk down the aisle to light candles in pews

While Kathy and Tina distribute the candlelight, a reader: In the beginning, God created the heavens and earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. A leader of the church of Ephesus wrote, That which was from the beginning, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life, we proclaim to you: God is light! If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have communion with one another. Friends, let us love one another, for love is of God.

**Hymn –** Silent Night, 145

**Commission**

**Kathy: Jesus said, “You are the light of the world”. Let your light so shine that people around you will be moved by the good things you do to glorify God in heaven. Go in peace; God is with you. Amen.**

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