

5 & 9 PM ✦ CHRISTMAS EVE, 2020

ENTER THE MYSTERY

WELCOME!

PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

*“Whether you are a seeker, skeptic, believer
or somewhere in between on life’s journey, you are welcome here.
We are grateful for your presence and invite you to participate
in worship and service of Plymouth Church.*

PLYMOUTH UCC PURPOSE

Growing people of faith who participate in God’s work in the world.

PLYMOUTH UCC VISION

Plymouth Church UCC is a Christian Community open to the transforming Spirit of God.



Thank you for worshipping online with us today. Please like and send us a greeting on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



The church office will be closed during concerns about the coronavirus.

The church building is closed for all activities until further notice.

Check PlymouthChurchSeattle.org for updates.

All pastoral care will be via telephone or other electronic means.

If you have personal concerns, you may contact a minister or member of the Pastoral Care Team via e-mails below, or call the pastoral care line, **206.639.7739**, checked daily.

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2020
CHRISTMAS EVE

*Worship with Plymouth Church UCC begins with meditation.
The quiet is meant to encourage and deepen your own inner work.
Thank you for entering this space, this hour, by honoring the spirit of worship.*

You can contribute to the mission and ministries of Plymouth UCC anytime, anywhere! Go to PlymouthChurchSeattle.org and click on the “Give” box, *or* text to give: Simply text the amount you’d like to give (i.e. 10.00) to Plymouth UCC’s mobile giving number (206.208.1442), hit send. Questions? Contact Diane, DJacobsen@PlymouthChurchSeattle.org.

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC

O Come All Ye Faithful, arr. Michael Raehpou
Sari Breznau, Trumpet

Silent Night, arr. Aaron Keim
Plymouth Ukulele Club

O Little Town of Bethlehem, arr. Mark Hayes
Dr. Wanda Griffiths, Piano

Gesu Bambino, by Pietro A. Yon
Elizabeth Nestlerode, Soprano; Dr. Wanda Griffiths, Organ

In the Bleak Midwinter
Arrangement and Vocals by Miriam Gnagy

Pretty Little Baby, traditional African American Carol
Sari Breznau and Bethanie Russell

PRELUDE

Lo, How a Rose E're Blooming setting by Michael Burkhardt
Dr. Wanda Griffiths, Organ

DANCE PROCESSIONAL Keon Price, Dancer
Music by Sari Breznau, based on the carol with lyrics by William Morris,
set to a traditional French dance tune
Filmed by Matt Fish

CAROL *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, vss 1-3* MENDELSSOHN
Jennylynn Vidas, Miriam Gnagy, Emily Kurlinski, Tim Keller, Michael Delos

**Hark the herald angels sing, “Glory to the Christ-child bring;”
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinner reconciled
Joyful, all you saints arise, join the triumph of the skies
With the angel host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the Christ-child bring!”**

**Christ by highest heav’n adored, Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time the Savior comes, offspring of the Virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased on earth with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the Christ-child bring!”**

**Hail the bearer of God’s peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life our Savior brings, ris’n with radiant, healing wings.
Mildly laying glory by, born that we no more may die
Born to raise us all from earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the Christ-child bring!”**

INVOCATION Rev. Dr. Kelle Brown

Come, you who are forgotten, for today your Lord has
remembered you.

God bids you come today. Your name is on the lips of the I Am.

Come all you who labor, you who are breathless, come and
be refreshed. Come and find rest; make your way through the
mystery to find that God is with us.

Come, you who are frightened, for here, there is peace enough.
Come you who are oppressed; depressed; grieving; hungry;
without safe harbor; you who know that no one understands you.
You who can’t voice your sickness for your tears are invisible.

Come to the God who sees you.

Come to the Holy One who goes with you deep into the
darkest night.

Come, for you are loved, valued.

Come let us worship.

Engage the Miracle.

Amen.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE Jennifer, Don, and Matt Castle

We have begun, a beginning born in the dark. In the womb of time, our vision is dim, but it is the chance for us to learn again how to feel our way to God. The darkness grows, and grows on us, teaching us that within it is God abides here. In the dark, hope is born.

(Lighting of the Hope candle)

Also, in the dark, peace is available. In the midst of much turmoil and violence, there can be peace. The kind of peace that surprises us as it washes over our worst fears. While we wait, God is with us as the One of Peace has come near.

(Lighting of the Peace candle)

With hope and peace abiding, the dark welcomes joy. Joy doesn't force its way into our experience, but seeps in through the cracks of our lives, like new-found well water seeking to quench our thirst. Joy waits with us, and promises that wherever we find ourselves, we are with God.

(Lighting of the Joy candle)

After many days of wondering, we find ourselves on the way of love. We falter, and love strengthens. We often want more, and love reminds of our blessings. Love looks forward while honoring how what we've endured made us who we are. The dark disorients us just enough to allow love to do its work so that we might become the ready midwives for the blessing, Immanuel, that has to come.

(Lighting of the Love candle)

This night, we give thanks for the radiance of hope—unrelenting and inexplicable.

We give thanks for the flame of peace—strong and unafraid.

We give thanks for the glow of joy—persistent and unpredictable.

We give thanks for the fire of love—hot and holy.

Our waiting has led us to a familiar place and forged us through the dance of the Spirit, of darkness and light.

Now, let us light the Christ candle as we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

(Lighting of the Christ candle.)

The light shines in the darkness.

And the darkness has enhanced its brilliance.

We have entered the mystery to discover God is nigh.

Let us engage now the miracle!

WELCOMEDr. Brown

CAROL *O Little Town of Bethlehem, vs 1,3,4* . . . Phillips Brooks
Bethanie Russell, Singer; Sari Breznau, Guitar

**O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see you lie
Above your deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in your dark streets shines forth
The everlasting light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in you tonight
How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given
So God imparts to human hearts
The glorious love of heaven
No one discerns God's coming
But in this world of sin
Where yearning souls long to be whole
The dear Christ enters in
O holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend to us, we pray
Cast out our sin and enter in
Be born in us today
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Emmanuel!**

LESSON.Luke 2:1-7
(NRSV translation) read by Dr. Elizabeth Gordon

This political background isn't incidental: it is crucial to the story. Conquering nations in the ancient world worked in various ways. Some brutally destroyed and plundered the nations they conquered. Some conquered people to enslave them. Other empires allowed the people to remain in their land and work as before, but with one major change: the conquered people have to pay taxes to their rulers. The purpose of a census like the one Luke describes is to be sure that everyone is appropriately taxed and knows who is in charge.

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.

CONTEMPORARY VOICE read by Jennifer Castle

Christmas Poem, by Mary Oliver

Says a country legend told every year:
Go to the barn on Christmas Eve and see
what the creatures do as that long night tips over.
Down on their knees they will go, the fire
of an old memory whistling through their minds!
[So] I went. Wrapped to my eyes against the cold
I creaked back the barn door and peered in.
From town the church bells spilled their midnight music,
and the beasts listened —
yet they lay in their stalls like stone.
Oh the heretics!
Not to remember Bethlehem,
or the star as bright as a sun,
or the child born on a bed of straw!
To know only of the dissolving Now!
Still they drowsed on —
citizens of the pure, the physical world,
they loomed in the dark: powerful
of body, peaceful of mind,
innocent of history.
[Siblings]! I whispered. It is Christmas!
And you are no heretics, but a miracle,
immaculate still as when you thundered forth
on the morning of creation!
As for Bethlehem, that blazing star
still sailed the dark, but only looked for me.
Caught in its light, listening again to its story,
I curled against some sleepy beast, who nuzzled
my hair as though I were a child, and warmed me
the best it could all night.



Mary Oliver was an American poet. The New York Times described her as “far and away, this country’s best-selling poet.”

PRAYERS OF THE GATHEREDRev. Donene Blair

Cheri Bader (Sister-in-law of Mari Mitchell), Riley Balcita, Matt Banks, Ken Carter, Pam Dorrance, Rick Eberharter, Maria Eclipse (Grandmother of Rogie Eclipse), Carmen Ramsey Ellington, (friend of Karen Clark), Phil Fredrickson, Keili Geller (Granddaughter of Nancy Geller), Peter Gibbons (Brother of Eileen Gibbons), Sharon, Floyd, and Carrie Gossett, Robert Hardy (Friend of Karen Clark), Joyce Irving (mother of Rev. Louis Mitchell), Virginia Johnson, Michael Kaid, Renee Lang (friend of Glenda Carper), Libonati Family, Sharon Masse (Wife of Gary Magnuson), John Mooney (Brother of Carol Mooney), Georgia Nelson, Dick, Jean and Alex Paul (Parents and Nephew of Beth Paul Russell), Tommy Rivers Puzey (Friend of Karen Clark), Jose Robles, Joseph Scott, Naomi Stein, Jim Stultz (Brother of Doug Stultz), Jaime Rubio Sulficio, Mildred Whitehurst (Grandmother of Toni Arthur), Samantha Williams, Stu Williamson (Father of Ruth Williamson)

- *We Grieve with Rev. Dr. Kelle Brown, Indigo Brown and all their family on the passing of Dr. Brown's mother, Sandra Price.*
- *Our hearts are with Angela Deppe and family on the passing of her mother, Mary Deppe, on November 29.*
- *Our hearts are with Deb Fouts, Al Wallace and all their family on the recent passing of Deb's mother, Jackie Fouts.*
- *Our hearts are with Joan Griswold and family on the one-year anniversary of the passing of her mom, Shirley Carlton.*



A variety of faithful addresses for God (Creator, Mother, Holy One, Father) are welcome at Plymouth UCC, including in the Lord's Prayer.



LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Parent, who is among us, blessed be your Creation.
May your loving presence be a reality here on earth.
May we become more interested in building your kin-dom here and
now than in waiting for it to come down from above.
Let us share our bread with those who hunger.
Let us learn to forgive as well as to receive forgiveness.
Help us through the time of temptation, delivering us from all evil.
For ours are the eternal blessings that you pour upon the earth. Amen.**

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LESSON Luke 2:8-14
(NRSV translation) read by Rev. Kevin Bechtold

God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.

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 God favors!"

CAROL

Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow, Trad. Spiritual,
modeled after Twin Bandit's recording
Plymouth Soul Choir, Directed by Sari Breznau, Edited by Doug Arney

LESSON Luke 2:15-20
(NRSV translation) read by Atticus Torres-Lee

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.

(Service continues next page)

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL OFFERING

Gifts received through the end of December will be divided evenly between *The Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross* and *Plymouth UCC Scholarship Fund*. Read about these funds at PlymouthChurchSeattle.org

CONTEMPORARY VOICE read by Julian Long
Shepherd's Song at Christmas, by Langston Hughes



Langston Hughes was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist. One of the earliest innovators of the then-new literary art form called jazz poetry, Hughes is best known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance.

Look there at the star!
I, among the least,
Will arise and take
A journey to the East.
But what shall I bring
As a present for the King?
What shall I bring to the Manger?
I will bring a song,
A song that I will sing,
In the Manger.
Watch out for my flocks,
Do not let them stray.
I am going on a journey
Far, far away.
But what shall I bring
As a present for the Child?
What shall I bring to the Manger?
I will bring a lamb,
Gentle, meek, and mild,
A lamb for the Child
In the Manger.
I'm just a shepherd boy,
Very poor I am—
But I know there is
A King in Bethlehem.
What shall I bring
As a present just for Him?
What shall I bring to the Manger?
I will bring my heart
And give my heart to Him.
I will bring my heart
To the Manger.

CAROL *Candlelight Carol* John Rutter
Plymouth Singers; Doug Arney, Video Editor

MEDITATION *Whom God Favors* Dr. Brown

SHARING OF CHRISTMAS LIGHT

You are invited to light a candle in contemplation and community.

**Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Savior is born! Christ, the Savior is born!**

**Silent night, holy night, Child of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from your holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Christ at your birth; Jesus Christ at your birth.**

BENEDICTION Dr. Brown

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 flocks,
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 the people,
to make music in the heart.

Amen.

CAROL *Joy to the World, vss 1-3* ANTIOCH
Jennylynn Vidas, Miriam Gnagy, Emily Kurlinski, Tim Keller, Michael Delos

**Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
Let earth its praises bring;
Let every heart prepare Christ room,
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.**

**Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns:
Let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**Christ rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of God's righteousness,
And wonders of God's love, and wonders of God's love,
And wonders, wonders of God's love.**

BLESSING

We Wish You a Merry Christmas performed by Josie Ann Kaiton

POSTLUDE. *Joy to the World* . . . setting by David Laskyn
Dr. Wanda Griffiths, Organ

If you lit a candle, please make sure it is fully extinguished after the service

Christmas blessings as you go forth in joy, for Christ is born!

10:30 am Worship Sunday, December 27, 2020

First Sunday after Christmas

Worship Leadership Provided by Pacific Northwest Conference, UCC

This service is pre-recorded

No live Zoom worship December 27

View service online using link at PlymouthChurchSeattle.org.

No hosted coffee hour December 27

**Merry Christmas and Blessings in the New Year
from Plymouth UCC Staff**

Rev. Dr. Kelle Brown, Lead Pastor

Rev. Donene Blair, Minister of Community Care

Rev. Kevin Bechtold, Minister for Children and Families

Wendy Blight, Interim Director of Operations and Finance

Dr. Wanda Griffiths, Director of Music and Organist

Sari Breznau, Director of Soul Choir

June Hayakawa-Fung, Faith Community Nurse

Jennifer Castle, Director of Faith Formation and Pastoral Intern

Anna Colwell, High School Program

Jennifer Kaiton, Faith Formation Program Coordinator

Suzanne Sanderson, Librarian

Toni Arthur, Assistant to Lead Pastor

Diane Jacobsen, Executive Assistant

Robert Turner, Communications Associate

Sandy Brewster, Bookkeeper

Oliver Stellfox, Sound Technician

Rogie Eclipse, Co-lead Building Staff

Gener Rillo, Co-lead Building Staff

Cameron Florey, Building Staff

Mark Marcial, Building Staff

