



Welcome

ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR

**Sunday,
December 24,
2023**

10:00 AM

**Fourth Sunday
of Advent**





Welcome to Worship!

SUNDAYS @ 10:00AM

In-person Worship. Masks and distance recommended, not required

Livestream on YouTube. Live at 10am then available on our channel

"The Redheaded Preacher" Podcast. Available wherever you get your podcasts, includes sermon and scriptures only, posted weekly by Tuesday



Ways to Give

Text Your Gift. Text your gift to [844-977-2346](tel:844-977-2346)

After a short set-up the first time, simply text your gift amount

Use PayPal. [PayPal.me/stpeteruccskokie](https://www.paypal.com/merchot/?x=1&url=https://www.paypal.com/donate/?url=https://www.paypal.com/stpeteruccskokie)

Send a Check. Mail to the address below ... this way still works fine

Set up Vanco. Contact the church office to enroll in regular giving



Open Communion

All Christians and seekers after God are invited to partake of the Lord's Supper with us the **first Sunday of every month** and special Holy Days (Christmas, Maundy Thursday, and Easter). **At-home Communion** participants are invited to provide their own elements and join when Pastor bids you, "take, eat, and drink."



About St. Peter's UCC

We've been in the heart of downtown Skokie since 1867. We are a part of the United Church of Christ, which means we are passionate about our faith and open in our thinking. We believe in a Triune God who **loves everyone**, regardless of gender identity, orientation, race, status, or physical or mental ability, and we **joyously welcome all people** to share worship, membership, marriage, baptism, funeral, and fellowship with us.



Contact, Follow, or Talk to Us

Rev. Richard Lanford (Pastor): revlanford@gmail.com

In the office Wed-Sat (times vary) and Sundays

Laura Olson (Office Manager): office@stpeteruccskokie.org

Office hours Mon-Fri 9am to 2pm

Ben Westphal (Music Director): bcwestphal@gmail.com

Facebook/Instagram/YouTube: [stpeteruccskokie](https://www.facebook.com/stpeteruccskokie)

Website: www.stpeteruccskokie.org

Like, follow, or join our email list for up-to-date info about events and activities!



8013 Laramie Avenue, Skokie, IL 60077 | 847-673-8166

**St. Peter's United Church of Christ in Skokie
Order of Worship for
Sunday, December 24, 2023 at 10:00am
Fourth Sunday of Advent**

Welcome to worship. The music before the service is intended as a time of silent prayer and preparation.

PRELUDE "Magnificat in C" by Franck

THE RINGING OF THE BELLS

ANNOUNCEMENTS Peggy Reins

Will those who are able please stand up

CALL TO WORSHIP

- P: Come apart to this place of rest and renewal;
Let your spirits rejoice in the presence of God.
- C: We will sing of God's steadfast love for all people.
We will proclaim God's faithfulness to all
generations.**
- P: God looks with favor on the humble and lowly.
God's covenant does not focus on rank or position.
- C: God strengthens those who are weak.
The proud are scattered in the thoughts of their
hearts.**
- P: Blessed are all who walk in God's light.
Blessed are all who say 'yes' to God's call.
- C: Let the heavens proclaim the wonders of God.
Let all the earth rejoice in the Christ's coming!**

OPENING RESPONSE "People, Look East" SSB # 36 (v. 1)

1. Peo - ple, look east, the time is near of the
 2. Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more
 3. Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim, one more
 4. An - gels an - nounce with shouts of mirth him who

crown - ing of the year. Make your house fair as you are
 seed is plant - ed there. Give up your strength the seed to
 light the bowl shall brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y
 brings new life to earth. Set ev - ery peak and val - ley

a - ble, trim the hearth and set the ta - ble.
 nour - ish, that in course the flower may flour - ish.
 weath - er, bright as sun and moon to - geth - er.
 hum - ming with the word, the Lord is com - ing.

Peo - ple, look east and sing to - day:
 Peo - ple, look east: Love, the Guest, is on the way.
 Love, the Rose, is on the way.
 Peo - ple, look east: Love, the Star, is on the way.
 Love, the Lord, is on the way.

CALL TO CONFESSION

P: People from ancient times have looked East believing that their god or their king would return from that direction to deliver them. Churches built long ago faced East, so their doors would open to welcome the second arrival of Christ.

C: **We know that Christ comes to save and re-create, but the Bible says He will also come in judgment. Are we ready for that?**

P: Let us be ready for today, and offer up a prayer of confession.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

A: **Gracious God, who promised to send a Redeemer to Your people, we confess that we have not trusted Your promise, but have busied ourselves with activities that obstruct its fulfillment. We give presents but fail to be present with one another. We socialize with friends, but fail to welcome the stranger in our midst. We create commotion, and refuse to receive Your peace. Forgive us, God, for such busyness and our lack of trust. Teach us wait with expectant patience for the fulfillment of Your promise to us. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON *Revelation 1:4-6*

P: The Apostle John wrote in the opening to The Revelation “Grace to you and peace from Him who is and was and who is to come . . . and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving His God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.”

One of the reasons Jesus was born was to give his life, including his blood on the Cross, out of God’s love, to forgive us and bring us back whole to the Author of Life. In the name and by the grace of Jesus Christ, our sins are wiped away. Let us claim our salvation together with the blessed words of acclamation . . .

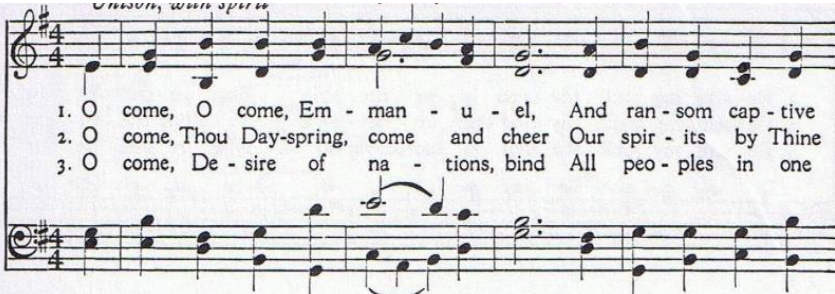
All: Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Amen.

HYMN

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

#88

Chorus, with organ

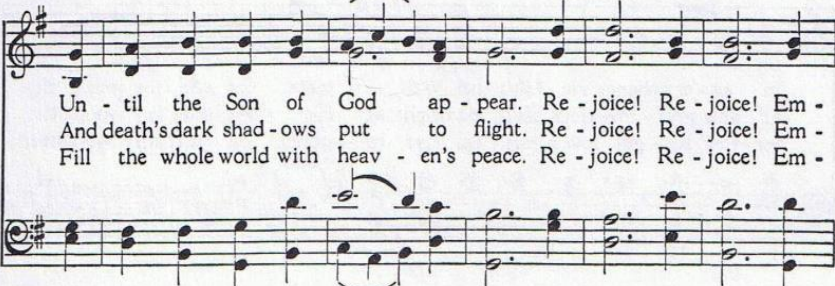


1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som cap - tive
 2. O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer Our spir - its by Thine
 3. O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind All peo - ples in one



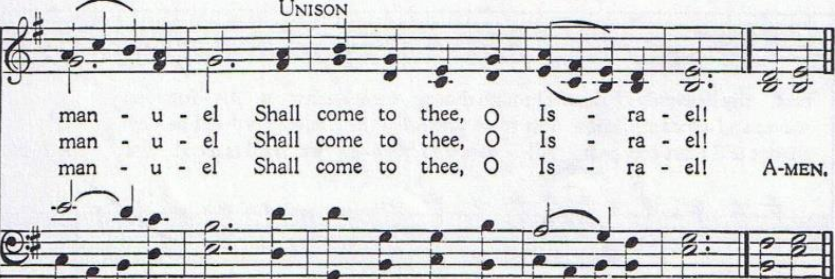
Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here
 ad - vent here; Dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night,
 heart and mind; Bid en - vy, strife and dis - cord cease;

HARMONY



Un - til the Son of God ap - pear. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em -
 And death's dark shad - ows put to flight. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em -
 Fill the whole world with heav - en's peace. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em -

UNISON



man - u - el Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!
 man - u - el Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!
 man - u - el Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el! A-MEN.

The congregation may be seated

LIGHTING THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE

Lighting the Candle of Joy this morning and sharing some thoughts on what Joy means to her is Anna Riley.

RESPONSE: "Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah" (v. 4)

Light four can-dles to watch for Mes-si -ah let the light ban-ish dark - ness.

5

He is com - ing, tell the glad tid ings. Let your lights be shin - ning

The congregation may be seated

MISSION MOMENT

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Beth Lanford

Old Testament:

2nd Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Gospel:

Luke 1:26-38

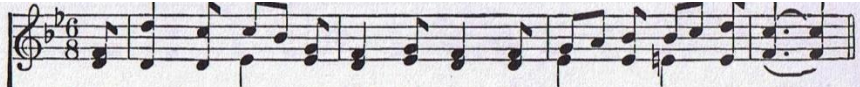
MUSICAL MEDITATION Selected

THE OFFERING

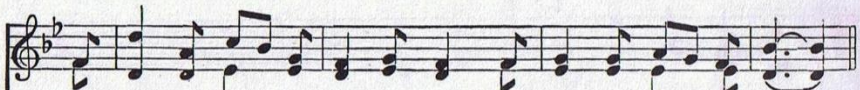
OFFERTORY

Will those who are able please stand up

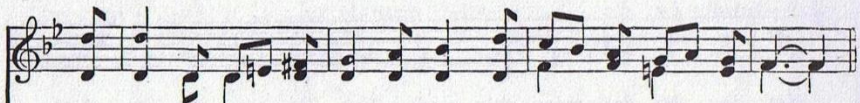
RESPONSE "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" #107 (v.1)



1. It came up - on the mid - night clear, That glo - rious song of old,
2. Still through the clo - ven skies they come, With peace - ful wings un - furled,
3. O ye, be - neath life's crush - ing load, Whose forms are bend - ing low,
4. For lo! the days are has - tening on, By proph - et bards fore - told,



From an - gels bend - ing near the earth To touch their harps of gold:
 And still their heavenly mu - sic floats O'er all the wear - y world;
 Who toil a - long the climb - ing way With pain - ful steps and slow -
 When with the ev - er - cir - cling years Comes round the age of gold,



"Peace on the earth, good - will to men, From heaven's all - gra - cious King!"
 A - bove its sad and low - ly plains They bend on hov - ering wing,
 Look now! for glad and gold - en hours Come swift - ly on the wing:
 When peace shall o - ver all the earth Its an - cient splen - dors fling,



The world in sol - emn still - ness lay, To hear the an - gels sing.
 And ev - er o'er its Ba - bel - sounds The bless - ed an - gels sing.
 O rest be - side the wea - ry road, And hear the an - gels sing.
 And the whole world give back the song Which now the an - gels sing. A - MEN.



PRAYER OF DEDICATION

A: Our best we give to You, loving God, for You have given Your best to us in the mystery of the Incarnation. May our offerings proclaim Jesus in ways that will be received with joy. Send your Word to the world in this season through our caring service. May we share it with one another in ways that help us all to grow. We are Your servants. The gifts we dedicate are already Yours. Thank You for all the ways You have provided for us, including providing for salvation through the gift of the Son, in whose name we pray. Amen.

The congregation may be seated

PASTORAL PRAYER AND SILENT PRAYERS**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**A: 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**

SERMON "Throne of David, Throne of Jesus"

Will those who are able please stand up

HYMN “Welcome God’s Word”

Please sing to the tune “As with Gladness, Men of Old” # 123

Welcome, God’s incarnate Word;

Come, explore the mystery.

Test the truth that we have heard:

Christ is lord of history.

In a humble child, behold,

One whose advent was foretold.

Crown the Coming One with strength

To fulfill God’s high intent.

All, throughout earth’s breadth and length,

Bow in awed acknowledgement:

Christ is coming soon to reign,

Sent to make God’s mercy plain.

Souls that magnify the Lord

Find their spirits lifted high,

Offering praise with one accord,

For God’s gifts that satisfy;

Pardon, faith and bread to share

Demonstrate God’s gracious care.

Will we build, at God’s command,

Genuine community,

Not the structures of our hands,

But a deeper unity?

God’s vast love empowers our quest,

As, in Christ, our lives are blessed.

Words by Lavon Bayler

CHARGE & BENEDICTION

P: Let us look up, lest we miss the light.

Let us go where God leads, lest we miss the good news.

**C: Let us leave behind the burdens God has lifted.
We want to embrace the hope of God's justice.**

P: Sing a new song to the God of our salvation.

Declare God's glory by the way we live.

C: We want our Advent-touched lives to be songs of praise. We want to communicate the joy we have found.

P: God's truth and righteousness will prevail.

The child of Bethlehem will lead us.

**C: Then we will follow where Christ leads.
Glory to God and peace on earth!**

P: Amen.

ADVENT DOXOLOGY *(Sung)*

Advent Doxology

(Once in Royal David's City)

R. G. Huff

IRBY

Henry J. Gauntlett

Unison

Praise to God, the One who made us. Praise to Christ, the soon - born Son.
 the new* - born

Praise the Spir - it, ev - er with us. Praise the God - head, Three in One.

Clear a path! Pre-pare the way! Ad - vent leads to Christ - mas Day!

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POSTLUDE

“Awake!”

by Lehenbauer

The music after the service is intended as a time of reflection. Pastor will be pleased to greet you at the Sanctuary doors as soon as the postlude has concluded, and our livestream has stopped.

FOR WORSHIP TODAY

MINISTER	Rev. Richard Lanford
MUSIC DIRECTOR	Ben Westphal
DEACON	Barb Bailey
LIVESTREAM RECORDING	Beth Sterba
NURSERY ATTENDANT	Heidi Tarzian

News in the Pews

Were we traveling with Joseph and Mary, we'd be nearing Bethlehem now — a relief, especially for the one great with child. So we ponder the solemnity and wonder of this day. Welcome to worship.

Thanks to everyone who served in the several ministries of the church this morning – ministries of hospitality, administration and worship! There is no Coffee Hour today as no one signed up to host it.

CHRISTMAS EVE EVENING WORSHIP is at 7 o'clock tonight! There will be the lighting of the Christ Candle, traditional lessons and carols, the Lord's Supper, a homily, an Anthem, some special guest musicians, and closing candlelight while we sing verses of "Silent Night." We hope you can come back tonight!

2024 Envelopes available! To everyone who's getting an envelope, you'll find them in the Memorial Room for pickup. If you don't see yours or want a set, let Chad or a BOF member know.

Let us say a big Thank You to everyone who bought or brought the baby and infant items here for the Sunday School Advent Mission Project, to our Board for Christian Education for planning this, and for all the kids who helped by bringing them up front! It still is ongoing through the rest of December so our thanks do not mean it's over!

Kitchen Time! It is our turn to donate to, shop for, and serve the meal at the Community Kitchen of A Just Harvest this coming Saturday, December 30th. We need contributions and volunteers both! Please see Chad McCoy with questions, or to volunteer.

There was no Sunday School today, nor are there classes next Sunday, December 31st. They resume at 9 AM on January 7th.

Pastor Richard begins a 6-day vacation on Tuesday the 26th which will last through next Sunday. Ben Westphal has, with Pastor's help on resources, put together a team of folks who will lead parts of a very musical worship service of the season on December 31st! In addition to singing and music, there will be prayers, Scriptures, and the sharing of readings which are not Scripture but are of the Christmas event and season. We may still need help on that day, so if we do, and you're a willing participant, please see Ben ASAP!

The Nominating Committee is at work asking members to consider staying on a Board, or coming onto a Board, or becoming an Officer of the Church. Please do pray about the request; there is a reason you were thought of to approach. It is always an honor to serve God in these ways, and we do need folks to help carry on the labors the Church!

SAVERS FUNDRIVE Begins now! Softgoods like clothing, shoes, belts, hats, purses, linens, stuffed animals and more will be collected during the month of January through Feb. 3rd. There will be a designated spot on and/or near the stage for collection. Bring during office hours or on Sundays. As well, there will be a date to be announced soon for the public to drop off on a specific weekend date and time.

Our People

Birthdays this week belong to Payton McDonald, Carol Iannotti, Carol Hook, Laura Olson, Beverly Mau, and if he's still with us, Maury Lord.

The Church Office will be closed on Monday, December 25th, and again Wednesday through Friday, December 27th through the 29th. Then again, it will be closed on Monday, January 1st in celebration of the New Year's Day holiday.

Parts of our worship service today were published by permission of the publisher United Church Press and The Pilgrim Press from *Led by Love* by Lavon Bayler, and *Touch Holiness (Resources for Worship Revised and Updated)*, copyright 1996 and 1990 respectively. The Revised edition of *Touch Holiness*, ed. Ruth C. Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi, is copyright 2012 Ruth C. Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

PRESIDENT	Peggy Reins
VICE-PRESIDENT	Beth Lanford
TREASURER	Chad McCoy
SECRETARY	Annie Noorts
FINANCIAL SECRETARY	Maria Altmayer

Regular Reminders!

We are always grateful for any and all offerings to the church. No amount is too small! See inside the bulletin's front cover for details on how to donate.

Let us know you were here! Please sign the attendance sheet in the black pew pads and when you think your pew is ready, please pass the pad towards the center aisle of the church.

Pastor's podcast is available wherever you listen to podcasts! Just type in "The Redheaded Preacher" and you'll find us!



MISSION MOMENTS

December 24, 2023

Christmas Eve (Fourth Sunday of Advent)

Luke 1:26-38

Birthing a Promise

Christmas Fund Offering

This is the fourth Sunday of Advent, the season when we set time aside to express the human longing for God to be right here with us. There are many moods in this season. Some of us are too busy and some of us are too lonely. Some of us take joy in all that there is, some of us grieve all that is lost. Some of us find comfort in the same story told a new way each year, some of us just want to hurry along to the turning of the year. Some of us find deep peace in the rituals of this season, and some of us feel very anxious. And many of us feel all these things! On each of our Advent Sundays, we are invited to sink deeply into our spiritual lives with a time of devotion and contemplation, knowing that God meets us exactly where we are - busy and lonely, joyful and grieving, comfortable and hurried, peaceful and anxious.

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." Luke 1:30-33

First, read the focus scripture for this day.
Read it again, more slowly, perhaps even out loud.
Now read it a third time.

What are the questions or images that come to mind?
Here are some to get you started. You may have others.

-During the Advent season, we have expressed longing for God, found comfort in God's presence and praised God for all the good we have received. Now we open our arms to embrace the Christ Child. Which of these moods of Advent are you feeling now? Or are you experiencing another mood altogether?

-What are some of your Christmas Eve traditions of the past? How are those traditions like or unlike how you will spend this Christmas Eve? How do those traditions help you draw close to the Child? Are there some traditions which need to shift or change?

-A big word for the coming of the Christ Child is incarnation. Spend some time with this word and this idea. How is incarnation confusing or uncertain for you? How is incarnation real or profound for you?

-If you are intentional about it, the season of Advent can help you get closer to God and deepen your spiritual life. Do you have ideas about how you might continue this intention beyond Christmas Day? What will help you live into that intention?

End your time of meditation with this prayer: Incarnate One, We long to be with you because you long to be with us. Your longing brings us the gift of the Christ Child. Help us to respond with a gift worthy of that gift, today and all days. Amen.

King David wishes to build a temple for the Lord, but God wills that he establish an everlasting dynasty. This passage is the basis for what is called the “Davidic Covenant,” the covenant God made that pledges there will always be a descendant of David on Israel’s throne. This covenant later became part of Israel’s hope for a messiah!

2 Samuel 7:1 – 11, 16

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, “See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.” ³Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you.”

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will

plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He 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. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵The 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. ³⁶And 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. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God."

³⁸Then 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.”