

Welcome

ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR

**Sunday,
December 31,
2023**

10:00 AM

**First Sunday of
Christmastide**





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/merchpot/display/external?merchantid=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 31, 2023 at 10:00am
First Sunday of Christmastide**

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

GATHERING MUSIC

RINGING OF THE BELLS

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Peggy Reins

**PRELUDE AND LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT AND CHRIST
CANDLES**

Will those who are able please stand up

PRAYER OF INVITATION

A: O Word made Flesh, You have come into our midst as light and wisdom. Desiring to be known to us in our lives and to be found in the world around us. Open our eyes and our ears and our hearts to recognize where you dwell— in our midst— challenging, heartening, lighting the way to truth, peace, and justice.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Leader: When we close ourselves off from the Light of the World, struggling to illuminate the lives of everyone, especially those who are poor and oppressed

A: Lord, have Mercy.

L: When we close ourselves off from the Wisdom of God,

A: Lord, have Mercy.

L: Struggling to be heard above hate-filled words and fear-filled rhetoric:

A: Lord, have Mercy.

L: When we close our hearts off from the Glory of God,

A: Lord, have Mercy.

L: Which is known fully only in a world of peace where all creation thrives,

A: Lord, have Mercy.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

L: In Christ, the Light, the Word, the Glory of God's love shines in our hearts, and we are forgiven and given strength to go forward into a new future. Let us give thanks that in Jesus, Emmanuel, God is truly with us.

OPENING RESPONSE "Good Christians, All Rejoice"

1 Good Chris-tians all, re-joice with heart and soul and voice!
 2 Good Chris-tians all, re-joice with heart and soul and voice!
 3 Good Chris-tians all, re-joice with heart and soul and voice!

Les - ten now to what we say. News! News! Je - sus Christ is born to - day!
 Now you hear of end - less bliss. Joy! Joy! Je - sus Christ was born for this!
 Now you need not fear the grave. Peace! Peace! Je - sus Christ was born to save!

Ox and ass be - fore him bow, and he is in the man - ger now.
 He has o - pened heav - en's door and we are bless - ed ev - er - more.
 Calls you one and calls you all to gain his ev - er - last - ing hall!

Christ is born to - day!
 Christ was born for this!
 Christ was born to save!

Christ is born to - day!
 Christ was born for this!
 Christ was born to save!

OPENING PRAYER*Led by Marlene Russell*

L: Leader: Glorious God, this morning we carol you with joyful and grateful hearts. Thank you for the angels and shepherds, Mary and Joseph, sheep and stars which remind us of Jesus—the one who brings peace for the whole world and peace for even me. Jesus, Prince of Peace, this morning we dream your dream with you. We dream of a world where peace is the norm:

where not a single person lives in fear,
where broken hearts find healing,
where enemies are reconciled,
where all children can laugh and play and always have full bellies,
where the oppressed and marginalized find justice.
Holy Spirit, if we are struggling to sing songs of peace this morning, envelop us with your hope, peace, joy and love. Nudge all of us to see new ways of living out your greatest commandment: to love one another and to be Jesus' peaceful presence here on earth. We pray as the One born in Bethlehem taught us:

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.

HYMN

"What Child is This?"

In unison

1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, On Mar-y's lap is sleep-ing?
 2 Why lies he in such mean es - tate Where ox and ass are feed - ing?
 3 So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh, Come peas - ant, king, to own him;



Whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet, While shep - herds watch are keep - ing?
 Good Chris - tian, fear: for sin - ners here The si - lent Word is plead - ing.
 The King of kings sal - va - tion brings, Let lov - ing hearts en - throne him.



REFRAIN



This, this is Christ the King, Whomshep - herds guard and an - gels sing:



Haste, haste to bring him laud, The babe, the son of Mar - y.



The congregation may be seated

SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 2:2-5

“Toward the Light,” by Anne Weems

Read by Judy Paige

OFFERTORY

Will those who are able please stand up

OFFERTORY RESPONSE



Praise God from whom all bless - ings flow. Praise God, all crea - tures



here be - low. Praise God a - bove, ye heaven - ly host. Praise Fa - ther, Son, and



Ho - ly Ghost. No - el, No - el, No - el, No - el. Born is the King of Is - ra - el.

The congregation may be seated

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 2:1-20

“The Promise Fulfilled”

Read by Barb Todd

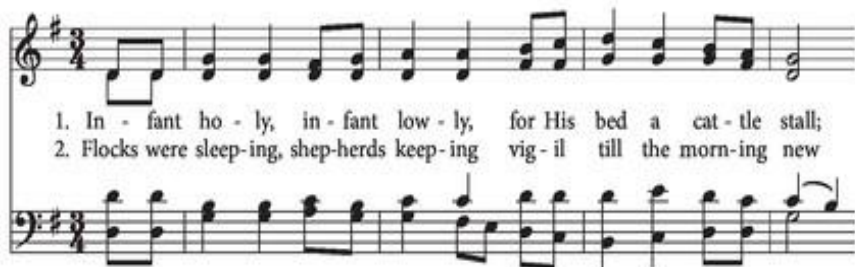
HYMN "The Hands that First Held Mary's Child"

1 The hands that first held Mar-y's child were hard from work - ing wood,
 2 When Jo - seph mar-veled at the size of that small breath - ing frame,
 3 "This child shall be Em-man - u - el, not God up - on the throne,
 4 The tools that Jo - seph laid a - side a mob would lat - er lift

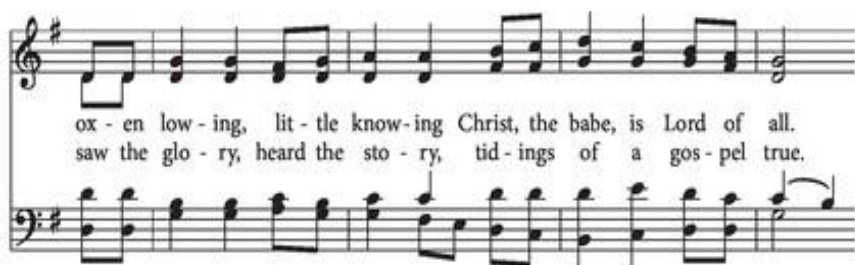
from boards they sawed and planed and filed and splin-ters they with - stood.
 and gazed up - on those bright new eyes and spoke the in - fant's name,
 but God with us, Em-man - u - el, as close as blood and bone."
 and use with an - ger, fear, and pride to cru - ci - fy God's gift.

This day they gripped no tool of steel, they drove no i - ron nail,
 the an - gel's words he once had dreamed poured down from heav-en's height,
 The ti - ny form in Jo - seph's palms con - firmed what he had heard,
 Let us, O Lord, not on - ly hold the child who's born to - day,

but cra - dled from the head to heel our Lord, new - born and frail.
 and like the host of stars that beamed blessed earth with wel - come light.
 and from his heart rose hymns and psalms for heav - en's hu - man word.
 but charged with faith may we be bold to fol - low in his way.

INVITATION TO SILENT PRAYER*Led by: Rich Schneider***HYMN****“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”**


1. In - fant ho - ly, in - fant low - ly, for His bed a cat - tle stall;
2. Flocks were sleep - ing, shep - herds keep - ing vig - il till the morn - ing new



ox - en low - ing, lit - tle know - ing Christ, the babe, is Lord of all.
saw the glo - ry, heard the sto - ry, tid - ings of a gos - pel true.



Swift are wing - ing an - gels sing - ing, no - els ring - ing, tid - ings bring - ing;
Thus re - joic - ing, free from sor - row, prais - es voic - ing, greet the mor - row:



Christ the babe is Lord of all! Christ the babe is Lord of all!
Christ the babe was born for you; Christ the babe was born for you.

SCRIPTURE READING

John 1:9-14

MUSICAL MEDITATION

“The Message of the Birds”

Read by Ben Westphal

**CHARGE & BENEDICTION
SHARING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST**

RINGING OF THE CHURCH BELLS

The music after the service is intended as a time of reflection.

FOR WORSHIP TODAY

MINISTER	Rev. Richard Lanford
MUSIC DIRECTOR	Ben Westphal
DEACON	Peter Svenson
LIVESTREAM RECORDING	Jenn Schneider
NURSERY ATTENDANT	Carolyn Kuechler

News in the Pews

We gather today, only halfway through the season of Christmas, and trusting God's guidance for the new year. Welcome to worship, one and all.

Thanks to everyone who served in the several ministries of the church this morning – ministries of hospitality, administration and worship! Thanks to Ben Westphal for putting together this very special service today!

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!

SAVERS FUNDRIVE has begun! 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.

Thank you to everyone who served at or donated to A Just Harvest Kitchen service yesterday!

Sunday School resumes at 9 AM on January 7th.

Pastor Richard will return to the office this Wednesday. Laura Olson will return to the office this Tuesday.

**Annual Meeting Reports are due December 8th!!!
Please have your report ready if you are on a Board or Committee, or an officer. Thank you!!**

The Annual Meeting and Luncheon will be held Sunday, January 28th 2024. Copies of the Annual Report will be available the Sunday before. Please plan to attend, and plan to read the report beforehand. Digital copies will also be emailed out to everyone on our list.

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!

Our People

Birthdays this week belong to Ben Westphal, Jim Todd, John Karol, and Alec Ryan. We wish you God's blessings all year!

Today's Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon were written by Susan Blaine for the UCC Service of Prayers for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

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 31, 2023

First Sunday after Christmas

Luke 2:22-40

Long-Awaited Gift

In today's scripture, the elder (Simeon) meets the infant (Christ Jesus). The image of the old person - wrinkled with the passing of their days and sporting a long, white beard - meeting the new baby - smooth and innocent - has been adapted in the secular world as a fitting image for the passing of the year. As we say goodbye to the old and usher in the new, what rituals do you practice to deepen and enrich your experience of the passing of time? Here are a few ideas. Maybe you have others.

Star Words

It is not known where the tradition of Star Words began, but this tradition is growing year by year among many congregations. In this tradition, words of intention, challenges to grow or spiritual gifts are written on paper stars. Then, each member of the group draws one star to guide them into the new year. Like the Wise Magi who followed the star in the sky to the Christ Child, pray that your word will lead you through the year until you more fully discover Christ's purpose for you.

Watchwords

A watchword is like a star word, except instead of a single word, a passage of scripture is written on each paper. If you choose this one, get curious about the scripture you are given. What words or phrases stick with you? Read it over several times. You may want to find it in the Bible and read it in context. Make this scripture part of your prayer life by praying it every day for a whole year. How does the watchword change as you live with it? How does it change you?

Letting Go of the Past

The new year is a good time to release what is no longer serving you from the past. Set aside some time to take stock of the past year. What were you doing when you felt God's presence and blessings most strongly? After you have written these thoughts down, ask God to bless what has happened in the past and to bless you in helping to release it. You may want to burn or bury the paper as a symbol of cleansing.

Set an Intention of Gratitude

As you step into the New Year, set an intention to express gratitude more often. Maybe you want to list three things you are grateful for before you go to sleep at night. Maybe you would like to wake up with the intention to express gratitude throughout the day. Maybe you want to be more aware of moments through the day when you feel grateful and express those in the moment.

However you prepare for the New Year, be gentle with yourself and choose one you will enjoy. You will be more likely to keep it up, and the practice will be more impactful that way.
