Trinity United Church of Christ

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Where God is Still Speaking!
Trinity United Church of Christ
December 26, 2021
1st Sunday in Christmas
9:30AM In-Person and Online Worship Service

Awakening joyful service guided by our still speaking God!

We ask that you wear a mask while in the Church building.

Congregational responses in bold print.
* Denotes standing as you are able.

PRELUDE

WELCOME/TIME OF SHARING

*CALL TO WORSHIP
Through Christ, we are one with God.
We are flesh and spirit, joy and sorrow.
We are more than what we seem.

Christ is God’s gift to us,
and we celebrate always this gift of eternal grace.
We are redeemers and we are the redeemed.

We have received the loveliest gift, and for that,
we sing of a great song of peace.
We have received it in order to go forth,
to share Christ’s love with all who love to listen. Amen.

*PRAYER

*CAROL #2 “Angels We Have Heard on High”

CALL TO CONFESSION
PRAYER OF CONFESSION
O God, you search us out and know us, and all that we are is open to you. When we make no room for Christ, and fail to welcome him into our lives, forgive us and heal us. When we follow shooting stars and squander our gifts in Herod's court, forgive us and heal us. When we seek to cut down those who might rise above us, and when we sanitize your birth place and erase from memory the poor and displaced, forgive us and heal us. When we sing sweet sentiments over Christ's birth, and fail to rejoice over his everyday presence, forgive us and heal us. Amen.

(Moment of Silent Reflection)

ASSURANCE OF GRACE
Friends, God forgives us.
This is why Jesus was born among us, to restore our relationship with God. So be glad, and continue on your journey with God. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS
Psalm 148
Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

2Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!
3Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!
4Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!
5Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.
6He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.
7Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,
8fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!
9Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!
10Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!
11Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!
12Young men and women alike, old and young together!
13Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven.
14He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the LORD!
Luke 2:41-52
Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. 43 When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. 44 Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day’s journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.” 49 He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” 50 But they did not understand what he said to them. 51 Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

*HYMN #145 “Once in Royal David’s City”

CHRISTMAS STORY
“Clyde’s Christmas Joy”

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH
Still Speaking God, as we enter this new year, may it be a year in which you are near to us in every moment. For we believe in you, Almighty Creator of Heaven and Earth. Lord Jesus, stay by our side day by day.
We place our faith in you, the one who is both God and flesh.
From your lowly birth in Bethlehem to your ministry of healing and of grace, from your self-giving death on the cross for us to your powerful resurrection and ascension, we believe in the truth of Your Word. Holy Spirit, come to us this year in a thousand different ways.
With your gentle direction,
your quiet voice,
and your wise instruction,
guide us along our paths.

Still Speaking God – Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer –
You have gone before us into the new year,
and you call us to join you.
We come in confidence and joy,
loving and trusting you. Amen.

CAROL SING

Selections from the Red Booklet or The New Century Hymnal.
We will sing the first and last verses of each Carol.

CHRISTMAS LITANY AND LORD’S PRAYER

Amazing God, you love us so much that you came to us as an infant.

**Born in a stable because there was no room at the inn.**

You call us to love the world as we have been loved by you.

**Wrapped in swaddling clothes, you slept in a manger because there was no crib.**

You command us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

You call us to create an inclusive church in which everyone is welcomed and loved.

**No one was turned away from the stable door.**

You keep calling to us to open our doors, to welcome the outcasts, house the homeless, feed
the hungry, and turn over the tables in the temple.

**Lambs and cows, chickens and donkeys, men, women, children…**

angels of all kinds, surround you.

Help us create a world and a church in which all of your children
are safe and loved, affirmed, welcomed, and fully accepted,
where we all have a community of angels surrounding us.

**One star brighter than the rest led the world to your door.**

May our love and work in the world be a beacon of hope to the hopeless,
and our churches be warm stables for all people.

**Dear Child of Bethlehem, as we remember the stable and the manger,**
the dusty roads you walked and the cross on which you died,
give us the faith and courage to tell your truth and make it our own.
We pray all this in your name and say together the prayer you taught us to pray:
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 sins As we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and glory forever. Amen.

CELEBRATION OF OUR GIFTS

* OFFERTORY RESPONSE “In The Bleak Midwinter” (Verse 4)
What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;
Yet what can I give him: give my heart.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION
In simple trust we bring our gifts, our tithes of all we’ve known,
we hear your calling in this hour.
To share our lives and spread the hope meant not for heaven afar,
but for your hurting and forlorn, your child who woke up this morning,
needing your love and ours. Amen.

*CAROL #136 “Jesus, Jesus, Oh, What a Wonderful Child” (2x)

*FINAL BLESSING
Go with us, Lord, throughout this Christmas tide:
be our protector, brother, friend, and guide.
Give us your peace and keep us in your care:
help us to spread your love and
grace throughout this world. Amen.

*POSTLUDE
Angels We Have Heard on High

1 Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
2 Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
3 Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;

and the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains,
What the glad some tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song?
come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the new-born King.

Refrain

Gloria in excelsis Deo;
Once in Royal David's City
Cecil F. Alexander, 1848; alt.


1 Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cottage shed,
2 Jesus came to earth from heaven, who is God and Head of all,
3 And through all this wondrous childhood Jesus honored and obeyed,
4 Jesus is our childhood's pattern, daily like us lived and grew,
5 We at last shall meet our Savior, fount of God's redeeming grace,

Where a mother laid her baby in a manger for a bed:
Sheltered in a rustic stable, cradled in a common stall;
Loved and watched the tender mother whose strong arms a cradle made.
Jesus, little, weak, and helpless, tears and smiles and comfort knew.
For that Child so dear and gentle reigns within a glorious place;

Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little child.
With the poor and meek and lowly lived on earth our Savior holy.
So, like Jesus, we should be serving God obediently.
Jesus felt the pain of sadness, and the joyous lift of gladness.
Leading all God's children on to the heaven where saints have gone.

'The Frances Alexander, wife of the bishop of Ireland, wrote a 'rlies of children's hymns commenting on the Apostles' Creed.
His hymn, elaborating on the words "...born of the Virgin fary," tells the whole life of Christ.

Tune: IRBY 8.7.8.7.7.

Henry J. Gauntlett, 1849

Harm. A. H. Mann, 1919
Jesus, Jesus, Oh, What a Wonderful Child

African-American traditional; alt.

Luke 1:30-35; 2:8-14

[Staff notation]

Je-sus, Je-sus, oh, what a won-der-ful child.

Je-sus, Je-sus, so ho-ly, meek, and mild; new

life, new hope the Child will bring. Lis-ten to the

an-gels sing, "Glo-ry, glo-ry, glo-ry," let the heav-ens ring!

This gospel song praising the newborn Child might be effectively used by repeating it several times. It could be sung softly as a background for dance, story, or drama. Finger-snaps on the off-beats might be used to fill the rests.

Tune: WONDERFUL CHILD 11.10.8.7.11.
African-American traditional
Arr. Jeffrey Radford, 1992
Clyde’s Christmas Joy!

By Frederick A. Young
2021
The old priest, Malachi, finished tying his sandals, grabbed his walking stick and headed to the stable. The lantern by his front door cast just enough light for him to see that the gate to the barnyard was ajar. As he approached the animals he greeted them as usual,

“Good morning my children!”
The doves cooed, the sheep baaed and the small grey donkey rustled in her golden straw.

“I see you had another restless night, my friend.” Malachi said to the camel standing in the corner of the stable.

When Clyde could not sleep, he would run, jump and kick throughout the barnyard. This would result in the clumsy camel kicking open the gate. As the farmer slung the feed be spoke to his animals.

“Well my friends, the time has come for me to leave you. I will be traveling to Jerusalem to live out my remaining years with my daughter and her family.” Patting the donkey’s soft head, he continued.

“But don’t you worry, my son, Obadiah his wife, and their two children just arrived last night and they will live here and take care of you.”

Clyde looked up from his munching grass (as if he knew he would never see him again) and let out one long grunting grumble, the old man, stopped and turned around,

“Perhaps we will see each other again someday, my friend! Until then, try to keep the gate shut!” And with that, he disappeared up the path.

Later that morning, Benjamin and Tabitha, Malachi’s grandchildren opened the gate and very slowly entered the barn. Clyde stood still in his corner not quite sure about the two small humans standing on the hay mound. Everyone seemed frozen in place until, Cooper, the curious calf, stretched his neck and let out a very loud,

“MOOoooooo!”

Benjamin and Tabatha began to laugh and the barnyard animals, all except Clyde, seemed to laugh, too.

“Wow, check out that camel,” yelled Benjamin.
“He’s wonderful!” replied Tabitha. “Saba (grandfather) did not say anything about having a camel!” The two approached Clyde but the camel seemed to be wary. They began to pet his legs and the sides of his large belly.

“He doesn’t seem very friendly!” Tabitha said as she went on the other side of his belly. Clyde grabbed a large amount of feed from his trough, swiveled his long neck and dropped it on Tabitha’s head.

“Hey!” She cried, brushing off the dry grass.

“No, but he sure is funny!” Benjamin said through his laughter. Clyde picked up another mouthful of grass and let out a hearty grumble as he dropped it on top of the young boy.

“He sure is!” laughed Tabitha!

As the weeks turned into months, the children became close friends with all of the animals. It was their job to keep the barn clean and the animals fed. Their parents, Obadiah and Martha worked on turning their home into an inn for those passing through Bethlehem, typically on the way to the larger city, Jerusalem.

One evening when he couldn’t sleep, Clyde the camel ended up kicking and jumping his way through the barnyard gate and running to a place he did not recognize. Lost and alone, Clyde started to walk toward the town. As he walked, he could hear an unfamiliar voice approaching. He stood still, hoping the stranger would pass by him. Unfortunately, the man was struggling with many bags and dropped most of them around Clyde’s feet.

“Well, look here. It’s a camel! What are you doing out here all by yourself?” he asked Clyde. Clyde snorted and looked away from the stranger.

“I sure could use your back to help me carry all these things. How would you like to come with me? I am Brutus and I sell my wares at Jerusalem’s biggest bazaar. Look, see, I have the finest spices, and bobbles and a few hand made carpets like you’ve never seen before! My booth is the best the bazaar has to offer.”

Clyde thought Benjamin and Tabitha talked a lot, but Brutus spoke so fast and so convincingly that the camel allowed him to pile his bags on his back. Off they went, to Jerusalem’s bazaar.
Clyde had never seen such commotion and excitement before, the bazaar was full of booths, food, colors and people. Clyde stayed near the back of Brutus’ stand until it was time to be loaded back up, head out of the city, and back toward his home in Herodium. This round trip seemed to happen quite frequently over the next few months. Clyde was getting used to his job, carrying items for Brutus. Although sometimes Clyde would suddenly jump and kick knocking oils, spices and beads to the ground. Brutus, the old peddler, would grumble and fuss, was loud at times, and a bit smelly, but he took good care of his camel.

As time went on, Brutus began picking up passengers on his journey from Herodium to Jerusalem. Clyde was big enough to carry up to three people as well as many packages of merchandise. For one drachma, anyone could get a ride. One evening those passengers made Brutus a little late reaching into the city and by the time they arrived Jerusalem’s main gate was closed. Only the eye of the needle remained open, the small gate in the large wall that protected the city. This meant that Clyde needed to have everyone and everything taken off his back so he could squeeze through the entrance.

Brutus began the unloading process as the passengers climbed down, one of them had a berr stuck in the side of their sandal and when the prickly berr dug into Clyde’s belly the surprised camel ran straight for the gate. Passengers and packages flew everywhere as Clyde crashed into the eye of the needle! The people refused to pay Brutus for their ride and most of his merchandise was destroyed in the crash. The very angry Brutus decided to sell the clumsy camel at the bazaar to make up for his losses.

The Innkeepers, Obadiah and Martha rarely made the trip to Jerusalem’s bazaar, but they needed to stock their pantry to feed all of their guests at the inn. Obadiah took the five mile trip into the great city. He stopped at Brutus’ dismal display, but found nothing he needed. He was about to move on to the next booth when he looked up and recognized Clyde. He saw that he was for sale and asked,

“How much for the camel?” Clyde remembered Obadiah’s voice and let out a joyous grunt! The innkeeper and the peddler struck a deal and an elated Clyde carried Obadiah home!

Putting the camel in the barnyard, Obadiah said to Clyde, “Wait until Tabitha and Benjamin see you!” Later that day when the children went out to the stable to do their chores, they entered the gate and got right to work, not noticing
the camel in the corner. When Tabitha got close enough, Clyde picked up a pile of
dried grass and dropped it on her head. The confused girl looked up.

"Clyde! You're back!" she squealed. Benjamin looked up from the feeding
trough,

"Clyde! Where have you been?" he yelled. The two children ran to Clyde
and wrapped their arms round their camel. Benjamin and Tabitha then ran up to
the inn.

"Clyde is back! Both children exclaimed, walking into the kitchen.

"Your father found him for sale at the Jerusalem bazaar." Martha replied.

"We have to make sure the gate is kept closed so Clyde cannot wander off
again." Obadiah told them.

That evening after supper was served and the dishes were washed and put
away, there came a knock at the Inn’s door. Martha opened it to find a frantic man
and a very pregnant young woman sitting on a donkey.

"Do you have a room where my wife and I might stay for the
night?" The tall stranger asked.

Obadiah came to the door and responded,

"No! With the census we are completely booked."

The woman groaned slightly in pain.

"We understand." she said repositioning herself on the donkey’s back.

Martha pulled her husband aside and out of concern said, "Obadiah, look at
her. That young girl is about to have a baby. Can't we spare some room?" the
innkeeper and his wife agreed to let them use the barn.

"Look, we don't have much, but we can offer you the stable out back where
we keep our animals. It is warm and the straw is fresh."

The couple agreed, and the innkeeper took them around to the stable. By the
time they arrived, Tabatha and Benjamin were not far behind. Obadiah cleared the
space around the feeding trough and put down fresh straw. The exhausted woman
laid down beside the trough and drifted to sleep. The man introduced himself to
the innkeeper.
"Thank you so much for allowing us to stay here. My name is Joseph and this is my wife, Mary. We have traveled here from Nazareth."

Obadiah left them to rest. As he was leaving the stable he spotted the children hiding beside the barnyard gate.

"Come on you two, let's go to bed!" The trio disappeared toward the inn.

Not long after the family got settled in their beds they heard loud cries coming from the stable. It was the young woman. Her baby was coming.

As the family was rushing down the path toward the barnyard, a bright light stopped them. They stood perplexed by the star that seemed to hover over their stable.

"What is it, father?" Benjamin asked.
"I am not sure," Obadiah said. As they entered they saw Mary holding her baby, and Joseph standing beside them.

"Please come in and meet our new baby, the light of the world." Mary said.
"His name is Jesus." Joseph added.

The light continued to grow and fill the entire barnyard. Before long, the stable was visited by shepherds and angels. One of them told Mary,

"We followed the light from that bright star, and it led us to this place."

The new family welcomed the visitors. All of the animals in the stable watched in disbelief at all of the people in their midst. Clyde the camel came out from his corner and gently placed some fresh straw around the baby, letting out a gentle grunt. He knew that this baby was special. Clyde's heart was filled with joy.

"Thank you!" Mary said to the camel as he backed away from the newborn.
"I am sure the straw will help to keep Jesus warm."

Clyde was sure of one thing, he was glad he had found his way back home to the barn because he would not have wanted to miss this special night.