

Mt. Zion United Church of Christ  
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Rev. Amy E. Northridge, Pastor  
Louis Allison, Tech Director  
Travis Pinci, Accompanist, Children's Music Coordinator, & Church Administrator

December 21, 2025

9:45 AM

**Fourth Sunday of Advent**  
**In the Dark Streets Shineth: The Light of Love**  
**Christmas Cantata**

*Thank you for worshiping with us today. If you are a guest, we invite you to take a moment to complete a visitor's card located in the back of the pew in front of you and place it in the offering plate when it is passed. We also invite you to sign your name in our guest book located in the back entrance of the sanctuary.*

*We welcome infants and children and all their wiggles & voices in our worship! For your comfort, we also have a children's corner in the back narthex where your child can relax and play and you can still participate in the worship experience. We have children's books and activity bags for them to enjoy! Additionally, after the children's message, children from 3 years old—6th grade are invited to participate in Sunday school in our classroom downstairs. They can choose to attend Sunday school or return to their seats to sit with their parents. Please see a member of the welcoming team for assistance!*

**WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME**

**PRELUDE** (Holy Dingalings)

*O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Traditional

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

L: We wait for love that draws near.

**C: We wait for love that stays.**

L: In ordinary homes and fragile hearts,

**C: love takes root and begins to grow.**

L: The night is almost over; the dawn is near.

**C: We are searching for your love in the darkness.**

\*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY<sup>1</sup>

L: God who comes close,

**C: As we wait in these last quiet days, Teach us to walk in love just as you have shown love for us. Let your Spirit fill our hearts with kindness and compassion for all humankind. Find us in the dark streets and shine your light, O God. Amen.**

## \*OPENING HYMN NO. 127 NCH (black hymnal)

*Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

# Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Piano  $\text{♩} = 80$

The musical score is written for piano on a single staff in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of five lines of music. The first line begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a tempo marking of a quarter note equals 80. The melody is simple and hymn-like. The lyrics are written below the staff, with two versions provided for the first line. The second line starts with a measure rest. The third line also starts with a measure rest. The fourth line starts with a measure rest. The fifth line ends with a double bar line.

1. Lo, how a Rose e'er bloom - ing, from ten - der  
2. I - sa - iah had fore - told it, the Rose I

5  
stem has sprung! Of Jes - se's lin - eage com - ing  
have in mind, With Mar - y we be - hold it,

9  
as the saints of old have sung. It came a flower - et  
the Vir - gin Moth - er kind. To show God's love a -

13  
bright, a - mid the cold of win - ter, when half spent  
- right, she bore to us a Sav - ior, when half spent

17  
was the night.  
was the night.

\*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

## \*TIME OF CONFESSION

### INVITATION TO CONFESSION

#### TIME OF CONFESSION

P: God of steadfast love,

**C: we confess that we have turned away from you and from one another. We have let impatience harden our hearts, and indifference dull our compassion. Forgive us, O God. Soften what has grown rigid. Open what has closed. Let love be born again within us, that we might carry your light into the world. Find us in the dark streets and shine your light, O God. Amen.**

#### REMINDER OF GRACE

P: Hear the good news: God's love never tires, never turns away. Through the gift of Christ, light breaks through our darkness, and we are forgiven, renewed, and made whole.

**C: Thanks be to God. The light shines, and the darkness cannot overcome it. Amen.**

## CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

*Travis Pinci*

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER

P: God of Love that will not let us go, we come with hearts open to your light. You choose to dwell among us—in our ordinary homes and fragile hearts. Let love be born again in us this day.

**C: Find us in the dark streets and shine your light, O God.**

P: We pray for a world that longs for love—for nations at odds, for families divided, for those who have forgotten they are your beloved children. Let your love cross every boundary and heal every wound.

**C: Find us in the dark streets and shine your light, O God.**

P: We pray for our community—for those who need to feel your nearness, for those who give and receive care, for those who work quietly behind the scenes to make others feel known. May this church be a home where love takes root.

**C: Find us in the dark streets and shine your light, O God.**

P: We give thanks for the love we have known—for friendships, for family, for moments when grace became visible. And we give thanks for our music ministry—our singers and musicians who make your love real to us in different ways. We name our joys aloud now, grateful for your presence in them.

*(Pause for spoken joys.)*

P: Thank you for the love these joys bring.

**C: Find us in the dark streets and shine your light, O God.**

\*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

P: We lift to you those who ache for love today—those grieving empty chairs, those longing for reconciliation, those waiting for a reminder that they matter. Hear now the names we speak or hold in our hearts.

*(Pause for spoken concerns.)*

P: Make the presence of your love known loudly to us when we feel discouraged and filled with grief.

**C: Find us in the dark streets and shine your light, O God.**

P: God of Love, make our hearts your dwelling place. Shine through us until every street glows with your light. Help us to trust that even now, your dawn is breaking. Through Christ, the Light of the World, we pray, so together we join in the prayer Christ has taught us.

**ALL: 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. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

## TIME FOR SHARING

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY & DISCIPLESHIP

OFFERTORY

\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

L: God of love,

**C: you came close enough to hold, and you hold us still. Bless what we offer today — our gifts, our time, our compassion —and let them become light for those who need to feel your love. Shine through all we give, and all we are.**

## CHRISTMAS CANTATA

*The Unfolding Light*

*Presented by the Choirs of Mt. Zion United Church of Christ*

*Christmas 2025*

OPENING

WORSHIP CHOIR ANTHEM OF GLORY

*Christmas Gloria*

by Libergen

MARY AND JOSEPH

SOPRANO SOLO & WORSHIP CHOIR ANTHEM

*Mary Did You Know*

Lowry/Greene/Schrader

NARRATION

TENOR SOLO

*Gentle Joseph, Joseph Dear*

by Birkland

NARRATION

WORSHIP CHOIR ANTHEM

*Prepare Your Heart*

by Beebe

SCRIPTURE

\*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

CHILDREN'S CHOIR & WORSHIP CHOIR      *A Christmas Proclamation*      by Yanerella

SHARING THE LIGHT

CHOIR WITH CONGREGATIONAL SINGING      *Angels Medley*

**ALL SING: Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains, and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.**

**Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

**Angels from the realms of glory wing your flight o'er all the earth; Ye who sang creation's story, now proclaim Messiah's birth: Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King.**

**Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

**Hark! The herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King! Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled! Joyful all ye nations, rise; Join the triumph of the skies; With th'angelic host proclaim Christ is born in Bethlehem! Hark! The herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King!**

**Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo. Glory to the new born King!**

NARRATION

WORSHIP CHOIR ANTHEM OF LIGHT      *The Light of the World*      by Williams

FOLLOWING THE STAR

WORSHIP CHOIR ANTHEM      *Is There Room in Your Heart for a King?*  
Stewart/Hayes

NARRATION

WORSHIP CHOIR ANTHEM      *Jesus, What a Wonderful Child!*      arr. Dilworth

SENDING FORTH

**\*CLOSING HYMN NO. 120** (red hymnal, see next page, vs. 1 & 2)      *Joy to the World*

\*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

# Joy to the World

Isaac Watts

George Handel

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**Piano**  $\text{♩} = 80$

1. Joy to the world! The Lord is come; Let  
 2. Joy to the earth! The Sa - vior reigns; Let  
 3. He rules the world with truth and grace, and

5  
 earth re - ceive her King; Let ev - ry  
 men their songs em - ploy! While fie - lds and  
 makes the na - tions prove the glo - ries

9  
 heart pre - pare Him room and heav'n and na - ture  
 floods, rocks, hills and plains re - peat the sound-ing  
 of his right - eous ness and won - ders of His

13  
 sing, and heav'n and na - ture sing, and hea - v'n and  
 joy, re - peat the sound-ing joy, re - peat re -  
 love, and won - ders of His love, and won - ders and

17  
 hea - v'n and na - ture sing.  
 -peat the sound - ing joy.  
 won - ders of His love.

\*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

## **\*BENEDICTION<sup>2</sup>**

L: Go now, disciples of Christ, and shine your light.

**C: This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine — with love.**

L: Where will you shine your light?

**C: We will shine our light of love —on ourselves, our families, our friends, and our community.**

P: God will use your shining light of love to bless all of creation. So go, children of the Light, and know that the Light of the World goes with you —Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

## **POSTLUDE**

*Classical Postlude*

by Haydn

***Thank you to all who participated in the Cantata! A special thanks to Debbie Butcher for writing and arranging the cantata!***

### **Worship Choir**

#### **Soprano**

Debbie Butcher  
Lana Fritz  
Carol Hartman  
Norma Hull  
Barb Neff

#### **Alto**

Brenda Beyer  
Jen Miller

#### **Accompanist**

Travis Pinci

#### **Tenor**

Mike Gibbs  
Michael Maletz

#### **Narrator**

Jesse Smith

#### **Bass**

Tom Bair  
Braden Bicher

### **Children's Choir/Holy Dingalings**

Jack Bicher	Cannan Ramsey
Hayden McCarthy	Nova Ramsey
Macey McCarthy	Elliot Stine

\*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

**Special Thanks to our Advent Team!!!**

Elaine Bevivino  
Lana Fritz  
Deb Herlocker  
Cindy Hogentogler  
Melody Stine

Thank you to Lee & Patsy Brown for providing our Christmas trees and the wreaths on our front door!

**Welcome Team Members—**Charlie Hull, Wendy Kindig, Nancy & Jeff Sleeper

**Liturgists—**Carol Hartman & Connie Wolfe

**Tech Team—**George DeMers, Ron Miles, Joe Vacante

<sup>1</sup>The Prayer of the Day was written by Lana Fritz for our In the Dark Streets Shineth Advent Series.

<sup>2</sup>The Benediction was written by Deb Herlocker for our Advent Series.

\*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.