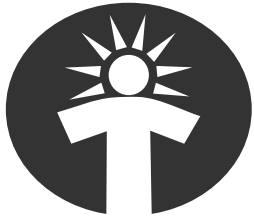


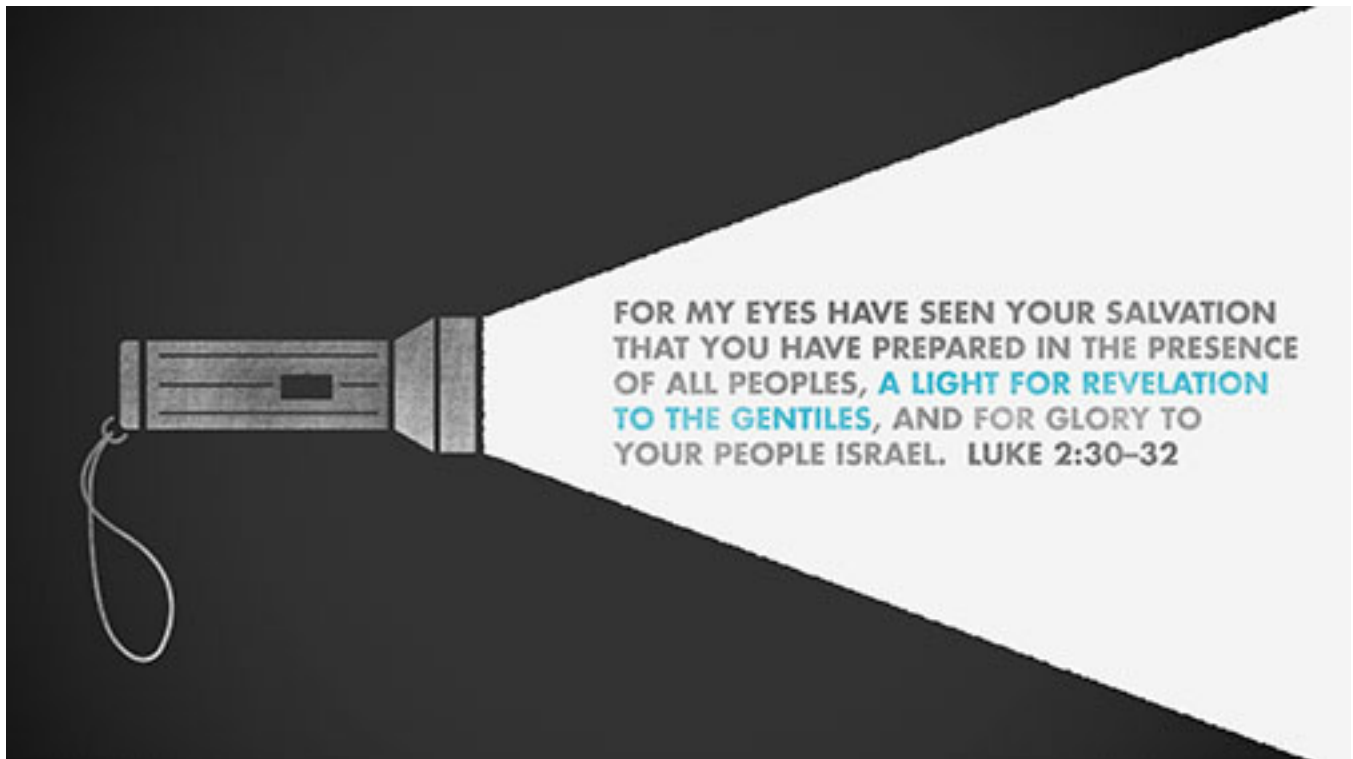
# Welcome!



First Congregational Church  
of Webster Groves  
United Church of Christ

*Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.*

December 27, 2020



*We respond to God's call by welcoming everyone regardless of ability, age, ethnicity, race, gender identity, sexual orientation or socio-economic background.*

*To proclaim in word and deed the love of Christ, we affirm that all may share in the full life, ministry, fellowship, responsibilities and blessing of our congregation.*

*No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.*

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

**PRELUDE** *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming* M. Praetorius  
Performed by Two Times True; video by Rev. Cliff Aerie

**WELCOME** Jane Porchey, *Announcer*

### TOLLING THE BELL AND LIGHTING THE CANDLES

**CALL TO WORSHIP** Based on Psalm 148 Jane Porchey  
(Responsive — Leader; **People**)

Praise your God! Praise your God from the heavens; praise your God in the heights!  
**Praise God, all you angels; praise God, all you host!**  
Praise God, sun and moon; praise God, all you shining stars!  
**Praise God, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!**  
Let them praise the name of our God,  
**Who commanded and they were created.**

**\*RAISING THE COVENANT** Covenant of 1977

**We who are called of God into this Christian community covenant together: to seek to know the will of God, to experience the joy and struggle of discipleship, to proclaim in word and deed the love of Christ, and to work for peace and justice among all people. We trust God's promise of grace and forgiveness and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our trials and rejoicing.**

**\*OPENING HYMN** *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly* Polish carol  
Led by Java Jived, featuring Mark Cereghino and Leon Burke III

Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall.  
Oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the Babe is Lord of all.  
Swiftly winging, angels singing, bells are ringing, tidings bringing:  
Christ the Babe is Lord of all, Christ the Babe is Lord of all!  
Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning dew.  
Saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.  
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing greet the morrow,  
Christ the Babe was born for you, Christ the Babe was born for you!

<sup>22</sup> When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), <sup>24</sup> and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.

<sup>27</sup> Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law,

<sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

<sup>29</sup> “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word;

<sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.”

<sup>33</sup> And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup> so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

<sup>36</sup> There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup> then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup> At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

*Response*

Leader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the people.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**AT THE KINARA**

*Second Day: Kujichagulia*

Elston McCowan,  
*Student Pastor*

*The Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles) of Kwanza'a*

*Umoja* — Unity

*Kujichagulia* — Self-Determination

*Ujima* — Collective Work and Responsibility

*Ujama'a* — Cooperative Economics

*Nia* — Purpose

*Ku'umba* — Creativity

*Imani* — Faith

**ANTHEM**

*Mary, Did You Know?*

Mark Lowry

Performed by Java Jived, featuring Mark Cereghino and Leon Burke III

**MESSAGE OF THE DAY**

*"Your Wait Is Over"* Merrimon Boyd, *Student Pastor*

Why was Simeon and Anna so happy? They were waiting. The days turned to months and months to years and years to decades. They were getting old and the conversation was too. Dedicated committed to the promise of God, they prayed, watched, and waited as time went on and the years went by. Did I mention that the years went by? They almost lost the hope that God would send relief in their lifetime. They waited until it just became routine.

Have you ever waited for something so long until the wait became routine? In an instant, it happened! God brought joy to their troubled hearts. God took their worries away. They received what they had been waiting for, the long-awaited Messiah of Israel.

Simeon sang a concert of four songs, a Nunc Dimittis, singing that he has the permission to be dismissed and go in peace. Anna, the prophet praises God, they have seen their salvation. Still filled with joy and the excitement of a newborn baby, after leaving the temple, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus return to Nazareth. The lowly child receives wisdom favor and God's undeserving love.

But believe me things were not so good for the young couple of Nazareth. Like us they looked back over their year of struggle and pain, scandal and poverty. Like me. I must admit they were a fragment of the marginalized, a piece of the black community, forgotten. All of us can look back over this year alone and recall the sickness and death the pandemic brings, political intrigue, natural disasters, racism, all kinds of outrage and divisions inside and outside the church.

But the good news of this text is YOUR WAIT IS OVER. Your vaccine is here! God's gift of love is granted to all of us! And that should be the very thing that gives you reason for rejoicing and power to express your love through song, action, or words from the heart.

Luke's narrative illustrates what James Cone calls, "Black power in the spirit of Christ himself". God's love is rooted in the work of liberating the marginalized peoples of the earth. It is not social status, gender, nor geography. God's love foundation is Jesus, and that love begins from the bottom and goes up. Rock bottom! I got rock bottom love.

God interrupts white privilege racism and white politeness, changes the hearts, and sets the captive free; reveals his salvation, praise God, and now we can go in peace.

Peace like a quiet tranquility after war when expressions of love make you feel awkward because its extravagance overwhelms you and you begin to know; peace is possible. Peace that appeals to interactions void of racism with expression characterized by the message of good news of self-love. The good and saving news of love between siblings and friends in community who value one another as neighbor, who acknowledges the faults and frustrations, that make us different but united in covenant.

This kind of love abides with you and partners with you sharing your pain, sharing in suffering, never leaving you alone or without hope. In dark times and in dark days, in a dark hour, Anna and Simeon held salvation in their hands, and kissed that light of their salvation and gave praises to God, receiving their peace. That is what the Christ child is all about. Your wait is over! What are you waiting for?

#### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

*We Share Our Joys and Concerns*

Elston McCowan

*Prayer of the Day*

Merrimon Boyd

*Prayer of Our Savior (Unison)*

**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 the glory forever. Amen.**

#### **WE SHARE OUR BLESSINGS WITH OTHERS**

*Invitation*

*Jane Porchey*

*Prayer of Dedication (Unison)*

**God of young people, like the baby Jesus eight days old; God of adults, like his parents who nurtured and loved him; God of the aged who see what potential there still lies ahead, like Simeon and Anna: they gathered at the Temple to present their gifts. And you blessed those offerings so that they are being given even to this day. Now, bless our gifts that their reach may not be bound only by our own time or place – to reveal your light, your revelation, your glory. Amen.**

**BENEDICTION**

Merrimon Boyd

**POSTLUDE** *In the Bleak Midwinter / In the Bulb There Is a Flower (medley)* Rosetti/Sleeth  
Performed by Two Times True; video by Rev. Cliff Aerie

**DISMISSAL**

Jane Porchey



# Poinsettia Sponsorships

## In Memory of

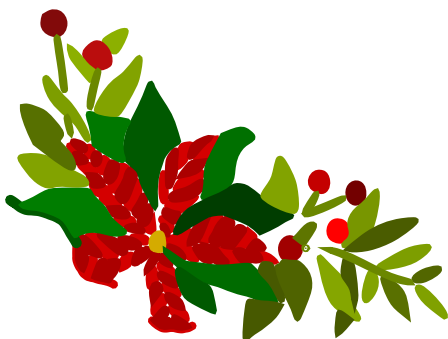
Kristy & Doug Barton ..... In Memory of In Memory of Carol McCoy  
 Faye & Marshall Dyer ..... In Memory of Our Parents  
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 Jeanene Harris ..... In Memory of Family  
 Joan Musbach ..... In Memory of Kenneth Musbach & Liz Wohlgemuth Duckers  
 Jane Porchey ..... In Memory of Loved ones  
 Carolyn Woodsmall ..... In Memory of Carol McCoy

## In Honor of

Janice Brennan ..... In Honor of Debbie Tolstoi  
 Mary & Mark Edwards ..... In Honor of Garie and Ken Perry

## In Celebration of

Elaine Coe ..... In Celebration of Family  
 Linda & Lazlo Kopetti ..... In Celebration of 50 Years of Marriage  
 Dana Romeis ..... In Celebration of HOPE





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*Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.*

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