

The Gathering of God's People



New Covenant Community Church
Akron, Ohio
First Sunday of Christmas
December 29, 2019
10:30 a.m.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Nancy Clem

Leader: In the deep shadows of the night, the Light of the World shines forth.

People: Through the pain of birth, hope arrives.

Leader: Out of the tyranny of oppression, a Liberator is born.

People: Amid the poverty of a stable, the Prince of peace comes.

Leader: From our struggle in the wilderness, the Way is revealed to us.

People: In the midst of the world's voices, God's Word has become flesh and lives among us.

*HYMN OF ADORATION

Joy to the World

PH 40

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

Nancy Clem

Leader: Although the Light of life has been born among us,
many of us often close our eyes to the wonders of God's grace.

We choose to live by fear rather than faith,

and we embrace the world's ways rather than God's wisdom.

So, trusting in God's mercy that enables us to begin anew,

let us now make our confession to God,

so that God will remove the dull sheen of what is wrong,

and allow the glory of God's light to shine upon us.

Let us pray together:

People: Almighty and gracious God,

even as we celebrate the wonder of Christmas,

we often remain blind to the vision of a renewed world.

**We are sinful and foolish creatures who even on our brightest days fail in
faith, hope, and love.**

Although we are not worthy of Your saving deeds,

we pray that in Your mercy You would forgive us,

**so that we may be renewed through the love You have given to us in Jesus
Christ, the Holy Child of Bethlehem, in whose name we pray.**

(Silent)

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS (adapted from Galatians 4:4)

Nancy Clem

Leader: When the fullness of time had come, God sent the Son, born of a woman, and born under the law.

**People: God sent the Son in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might
receive adoption as God's children.**

Leader: Friends, believe the good news of the gospel:

People: Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

FOURTH READING *The Birth of Jesus* **Luke 2:1-7**

¹ In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.



AN INTERPRETATIVE WORD *Che Jesus* Anonymous (Cordoba, Argentina, 1970)

They told me that you came back to be born every Christmas.
Man, you’re crazy!
... with the stubborn gesture of coming back every Christmas
you are trying to tell us something.

That the revolution that all proclaim begins first of all in each heart,
That it doesn’t mean only changing structures but changing selfishness for love,
That we have to stop being wolves and return to being brothers and sisters.
That we begin to work seriously for individual conversion and social change that will give to all
the possibility of having bread,
education, freedom, and dignity.

That you have a message called the Gospel,
And a Church, and that’s us –
A Church that wants to be servant of all,
A Church that knows that because God became human one Christmas
there is no other way to love God but to love all people.
If that’s the way it is, Jesus, come to my house this Christmas,
Come to my country,
Come to the world of men and women.
And first of all, come to my heart.

FIFTH READING *The Shepherds and the Angels* **Luke 2:8-16**

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.
⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”
¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

CAROL *Gentle Mary Laid Her Child* PH 27

SIXTH READING *The Word Became Flesh* **John 1:1-14**

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.
⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.
¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.
¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.
¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.



