

Even when light fades and darkness falls--as it does every single day, in every single life--God does not turn the world over to some other deity...Here is the testimony of faith; darkness is not dark to God; the night is as bright as the day.

Barbara Brown Taylor, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*

Christmas symbolizes hope even at a moment when hope seems utterly fantastic. The raw materials of the Christmas mood are a newborn baby, a family, friendly animals, and labor. An endless process of births is the perpetual answer of life to the fact of death.

Howard Thurman, 20<sup>th</sup> century

Prayer Candles: Is there a person or relationship that needs a prayer?

Please come forward and light an individual prayer candle before our worship begins.

### Greeting One Another in Peace and Friendship Welcome and Announcements

**The Prelude** *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly* arr. Smith  
Mark Baker, *piano*; Laura Artesani, *organ*

### The Centering Silence

**The Introit** *Unto Us is Born a Son* arr. David Willcocks

\* **The Gathering Hymn** *What Child Is This* #162

### \* The Call to Worship

Light looked down and saw darkness

**"I will go there," said Light.**

Peace looked down and saw war.

**"I will go there," said Peace.**

Love looked down and saw hatred.

**"I will go there," said Love.**

So the Lord of Light, the Prince of Peace, and the Ruler of Love,  
came down and crept in beside us.

### The Gathering Prayer (*unison*)

**Exalted God, even as the heavenly host sang of your glory  
in the night skies over Bethlehem;  
even as the star shone in the heavens,  
and sheep and cattle gathered in that light,  
so we gather, young and old together,  
to recount all that you have done for us in mercy and steadfast love.  
No tyrant's threat or deadly act can destroy  
the dreams and visions you have placed within us,  
for you have drawn us close.  
With all creation, we praise you and  
exalt your name forever and ever. Amen.**

**The Anthem** *Coventry Carol* arr. R. R. Terry

**A Time for the Child in Each of Us** Sarah Marx

**Sing Our Children to Sunday School** (*seated*) *Go Now In Peace* #437(twice)

Go now in peace, go now in peace, may the love of God surround you  
everywhere, everywhere you may go.

**The Prayer Hymn** (*seated*) *When God Is a Child* # 132

### The Silent Prayer and Pastoral Prayer

**The Lord's Prayer** (*unison*) *Human Rites: Worship Resources for an Age of Change*  
compiled by Hannah Ward and Jennifer Wild

**Beloved, our Father and Mother, in whom is heaven,  
hallowed be your name, followed be your royal way, done be your will and rule,  
throughout the whole creation.**

**With the bread we need for today, feed us.**

**In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.**

**In times of temptation and test, Strengthen us.**

**From trials too great to endure, spare us.**

**From the grip of all that is evil, free us.**

**For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, Now and forever.**

**Amen.**

**The Congregational Response** *O Lord, hear my prayer* Taize Community

**O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer. When I call answer me.**

**O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer. Come and listen to me.**

**The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: All my hope comes from God.**

**The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: God, the well-spring of life.**

**The Offering Prayer of Dedication** (*unison*)

**God of mercy and compassion, as we bring our gifts this morning, we still  
bask in the warmth of celebrations of Christmas. Alongside these  
blessings, let us also remember this story of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph  
fleeing as refugees at your direction to escape persecution in their  
homeland. We can only pray they found welcome and compassion in their  
flight, and we pray that the gifts we give and the lives we lead will offer  
compassion and welcome to your children, wherever they are in need. In  
Christ, who opens his arms to all. Amen.**

**The Offering and The Offertory** *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* arr. Gehrke

\* **The Doxology** # 21

**Let the whole creation cry, Alleluia! Glory be to God on high! Alleluia!  
Sun and moon, lift up your voice, Alleluia! Night and stars in God rejoice,  
Alleluia!**

**The Gospel Reading** Matthew 2:13-23 Irene von Hoffmann, *Liturgist*

**The Sermon** Rev. Malcolm Himschoot & Rev. Mariah Hayden

\***The Parting Hymn** *O God of All the Nations* written by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette  
(please see insert)

### The Benediction

### The Congregational Benediction

**May the birth of Jesus be renewed in our lives.**

**May the Spirit of Jesus guide our words and thoughts.**

**May the life of Jesus inspire us to follow in the way of hope.**

**Postlude** *The Holly and the Ivy* arr. Rasley

## Today's Plate Offering

### unmarked gifts

**OPEN DOORS:** CUF's mission to and for our community is to keep the church doors open to promote community-building activities and encourage positive relationships. Many local, **non-profit** groups use our beautiful facility—Girl Scouts, Orono Health Association, Euphony, Women of the World, Still Water Sangha, Operation Breaking Stereotypes--to name just a few! Relationships are formed, plans are made, lessons are learned, and community is built and nourished with love and laughter. CUF considers the cost of our open doors (heat, lights, cleaning) a benevolence gift to the greater Orono/Old Town community. Won't you help?

### marked gifts (check or envelope)

#### PLEDGE:

Your week/month/annual commitment  
to the life of our church.

#### 350.org

Our **CUF youth** traditionally choose our benevolence giving recipient for the month of December. This year, they have chosen 350.org

Climate change isn't a distant problem -it is here now. People all over the world are feeling the impacts. From island nations that are going underwater to indigenous lands being exploited for fossil fuel extraction. The fight against climate change is a fight for justice. **350.org** uses online campaigns, grassroots organizing, and mass public actions to oppose new coal, oil and gas projects, take money out of the companies that are heating up the planet, and build 100% clean energy solutions that work for all. The 350.org network extends to 188 countries.

Please make checks payable to  
**The Church of Universal Fellowship.**  
Memo your check or mark your envelope:

#### Pledge or 350.org

**Please put your name on envelopes!**  
**(unmarked gifts will support Open Doors)**