

WELCOME TO
Old Zionsville United Church of Christ
5981 Fountain Road, P.O. Box 215
Old Zionsville, PA 18068

Email: ozuccoffice@ptd.net Web page: www.oldzionsucc.org
Church Office: 610-966-3601
Pastor: 610-393-3522 or 610-966-3436

<u>Rev. Lori Esslinger</u>	<u>Pastor</u>
<u>David Carlson</u>	<u>Organist</u>
<u>December 24, 2025</u>	<u>3:00 pm</u>

**those who are able may stand*

Christmas Eve

The Babe

Gathering

Like the iconic figures gathered around the Christ Child in our nativity scenes, we gather together because we want to know Jesus more as we seek to bring his Reign of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love on earth.

Prelude: "Slumber Song" (Schumann)

Welcome and Announcements

Lighting of the Altar Candles

We Gather at the Scene

Leader: In 1865, William Chatterton Dix penned a poem that would become the beloved Christmas-time favorite, "What Child is This?" This year for Advent and Christmas, we have been prompted by this carol to ask deeper questions of Jesus' identity, "what child IS this?" When we look beyond the lullaby and behind the scenes, what we discover is that the answers are much more complicated than the lilting lullaby tune conveys. The time of Jesus' birth was fraught with difficulties. This is the scene into which Jesus was born. We are called, as his disciples, to enter the scene in the midst of our own complicated and difficult time in history, offering Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love as the Christ Child did.

Sung:

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**What Child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?**

Lighting of the Advent Wreath:

Consistory President, Cheryl Martucci
and son McGwire

Leader: God so loved the world that God became us in order to know us, to love us, even more deeply. Not just the cross at the end of Jesus' life, but the difficulty of the time of Christ's birth can show us the reality of "God-with-us" no matter what. This is a theme from our faith story that can open our hearts to see our own place in the narrative of history. No matter how afraid we are, the Babe "whom shepherds guard and angels sing" lives within us waiting to grow into Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love incarnate.

Reader 1: We light these candles for those who need it most

Reader 2: For all who need more Hope.

Reader 1: For all who yearn for Peace.

Reader 2: For all whose Joy lays dormant.

Reader 1: For all who need the salve of Love.

Reader 2: For all of who need this Child of Possibility.

Reader 1: Our question for this night at the scene of the nativity is this: "How do the messages of this child reverberate into our time, our lives, our world?"

Reader 2: What child IS this? This, this, is Christ the King who reigns with hope, peace, joy, and love forever.

Sung:

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**This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!**

Prayer of Invocation (unison)

**Here, at the nativity of your birth,
give us the courage to face this moment
with humility and hope.
Open us to new understandings of
the unfolding story of your presence among us.
Show us the true meaning of the kingdom on earth
as it is in heaven.
We pray in the name of the Child,
the One Who Reigns in our hearts and lives.
Amen.**

Bring Him Laud

*Opening Hymn: "Joy to the World"

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We Hear the Story

Sing "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

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**O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.
O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin and enter in;
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels,
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel!**

Scripture: Luke 2: 1 - 20

Reflection

Responding

Our faithful response is to praise God for this story of Emmanuel, God-With-Us, even and especially in the midst of difficulty, for God is indeed with us even still.

We Keep Watch – Prayers and Offerings

Leader: In this moment of silent contemplation, we lift up our hopes for the world, for its people, for the kind of kin-dom embodied by the child who became the Christ. Let us pray:

Pastoral Prayer

Be with us as we seek to be the Body of Christ in the world.

We pray this in the way you taught us, saying...

*The Lord's Prayer (sung)

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Our Father, which 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

So Bring Him...

(Offering)

What gifts are adequate for the King of Kings, the Child of Light? Our

theme song says “so bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come peasant, king, to own him.” Whether what we have to give is simply the gift of our presence and gratitude, or if we are privileged with coffers of precious resources, we give what we can. In this way, we “take ownership” of our role in the scene, in the unfolding story of Light in the dark corners.

Offertory: “O Holy Night”

(Adam)

*Presentation of our Gifts and The Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

The Brief Service of Holy Communion

(We hold the elements and partake together. In each tray you will find bread and gluten free wafers and white grape juice and grape wine.)

Sending Forth

Just as our theme carol asks, “what child is this?” we, too, have come with our questions this day. We go into the world with answers of Good News, being the Body of Christ through our words and deeds.

We Ask, We Answer

As we prepare to go into the world,
let us ask and answer the question we came with.

What child IS this?

This is the one born into a time when
hope was hard.

What child IS this?

This is the one whose lowly status would send
a message of peace with justice.

What child IS this?

This is the one who promises us joy
even when life is difficult.

What child IS this?

This is the “King of Kings”
who shows us the way of true love for all people.

What child IS this?

This, this, is the babe whose Light
spreads through our lives to others and to the world.

Lighting of Candles

The light will be brought to the end of each row, tip your unlit candle into

the flame so that it may take hold. Do not tip your lit candle! Pass the light along your row until every candle is lit. After the candles are lit, we will join in singing...

*Closing Hymn: "Silent Night"

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Benediction

This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

Extinguish your candles and remember the flame that enters your heart is Christ Our Lord!

May the True Sovereign,
the Child of Light,
the Spirit of Resistance to Injustice
be with you now and as you go.

Merry Christmas!

Merry Christmas!

*Extinguishing of the Altar and Advent Candles

Postlude: "On Christmas Night"

(Page)

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<http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com/whatchild>

**TODAY'S GREETERS** are members of Consistory.

**We welcome all who are worshipping with us this afternoon and pray that you will find Christ in your heart this year!**

**Merry Christmas!**

RESTROOMS ARE AVAILABLE on the main floor of the Church and downstairs.

Bulletin MAGNIFIER SHEETS can be found on the sound system.



Our church is equipped with an Assistive Listening System. You provide your own headphones which can be connected to the transmitter which will allow you to more clearly hear the Worship Service or any program being offered in the Sanctuary. See anyone at the sound booth to inquire.