



THE OLD STONE CHURCH

DECEMBER 20, 2022

6:00pm Chapel Worship

CALL TO WORSHIP

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be.

What came to be through God was life, and this life was the light of the world.

**The Light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.**

WELCOME

Pastor Stephen C. Blonder Adams

HYMN (*Tune: St. Louis*) (*Sung by all, standing*)

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.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is given;
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us this day
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-11 (*All sit*)

3 For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven:

² a time to be born and a time to die;

a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted;

³ a time to kill and a time to heal;

a time to break down and a time to build up;

⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn and a time to dance;

⁵ a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;

⁶ a time to seek and a time to lose;

a time to keep and a time to throw away;

⁷ a time to tear and a time to sew;

a time to keep silent and a time to speak;

⁸ a time to love and a time to hate;

a time for war and a time for peace.

⁹ What gain have the workers from their toil?

¹⁰ I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with.

¹¹ God has made everything suitable for its time;
moreover, God has put a sense of past and future into their minds,
yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

PSALM 22 *(All read the boldface verses together.)*

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the words of my groaning?
**O my God, I cry by day but you do not answer,
and by night, but I find no rest.**

In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.
**It was you who brought me from the womb,
you who kept me safe on my mother's breast.
Since my mother bore me, you have been my God.**

Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.
**God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted.
God does not hide from me.
When I cry to God, God hears me.
Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 23 *(All read together.)*

**The LORD is my shepherd; *
I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; *
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul; *
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; *
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; *
thou annointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, *
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

ANTHEM

Everything Worth Holding Onto

ISAIAH 40 (Selected verses)

40 Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

³ A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵ Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

⁶ A voice says, “Cry out!”

And I said, “What shall I cry?”

All flesh is grass;

their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷ The grass withers; the flower fades,
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸ The grass withers; the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand forever.

¹¹ He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms
and carry them in his bosom
and gently lead the mother sheep.

²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.

²⁹ He gives power to the faint
and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰ Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted,

³¹ but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;
they shall run and not be weary;
they shall walk and not faint.

MEMORY STARS

(At this time you are invited to write on each star your concerns for others or your own concerns. And then as you leave the sanctuary at the end of the service please hang the star(s) on one of the trees at the front of the sanctuary).

MUSIC INTERLUDE

LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

(The first candle is lighted.)

We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost.
We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies.

We embrace and give thanks for the memories
that bind them to us in this season of expectation,
when all Creation waits for the Light.

We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the son of God appear
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

A period of silent reflection

(The second candle is lighted.)

We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss:
loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health,

loss of faith, the loss of joy.

We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God,

and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands

You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

We remember that through You all things are possible.

Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.

**O come thou Wisdom from on high, who orderest all things mightily
To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

A period of silent reflection

(The third candle is lighted.)

We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time.

We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years,
that have been heavy with our burdens.

We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory,

the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain.

We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short,

and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you,

for all that we have suffered.

We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness;
and in knowledge of our own mortality.

We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost,
we may have turned away from the light,
the light itself has not failed.
We remember that though winter be upon us
and though the night be dark,
with the turning of the Wheel the dawn will come,
and dawn defeats the darkness.

O come thou day-spring, come and cheer our spirits by thy advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight
Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

A period of silent reflection

(The fourth candle is lighted.)

We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope
that God offers to us in the stories of Hanukkah and of Christmas,
which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness,
in a time of war and in a poor stable.
We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple
and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

**We remember the One who shares our burdens,
who shows us the way to the Light,
and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.**

O come desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind
Bid then our sad, divisions cease, and be thyself our King of Peace
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

A period of silent reflection

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE *(All stand.)*

God of wisdom, we come to you this Christmas Season
tired, in turmoil, and in pain.
As the nights have grown longer, so has darkness grown
and wrapped itself around our hearts.
In this season of longest night,
we ask your healing blessings upon all that we carry in our hearts --
sorrow we fear may never end, wounds we cannot even put into words.
Lord, hear our prayer,
And in Your merciful love, answer.

God of mercy and compassion,
there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been.
Death or loss or terrible hurt has changed our experience of Christmas.
We remember that once it was a special day for us, too,
but someone or something precious has gone away from us in this life.
We have lost a beloved, a job, a goal, a cause, a dream.
We find ourselves adrift and alone.
We are weary from the journey, and we have found no room at the inn.
We come to you seeking rest, and peace, and shelter from the storm.
Lord, hear our prayer.

And in Your merciful love, answer.

God of grace, in the spirit of the season, grant us all that we need
to comfort us as we journey through this Christmas season.
We ask that you shelter and sustain all those of us,
both here and throughout the world,
who wander or want or weep or are heavy laden,
that we may be lifted up in courage and journey on in Thy peace.
Lord, hear our prayer.

And in Your merciful love, answer.

God of love, in this Christmas Season we embrace and offer up to you
all that used to be which is now lost to us, and cannot be again.
With celebration all around us, memories of what was,
and fears of what may be, weigh heavy on our hearts.
Please hold us close in your embrace, be near to us this night,
until the light returns and morning comes.
Lord, hear our prayer,

And in Your merciful love, answer.

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night,
and give thine angels charge over those who sleep.
Tend the sick, Lord; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering,
pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for thy love's sake. Amen.

HYMN (Tune: *American*) (*Sung by all, standing.*)

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little lord Jesus laid down his sweet head
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
the little lord Jesus asleep in the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love thee, lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care
And take me to heaven to live with thee there.

LUKE 2:1-7 (*All sit.*)

² In those days a decree went out from Caesar 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 in the guest room.

OFFERING OF LIGHT

One legend we celebrate in this season tells how a few brave fighters, defending their temple, had only enough oil to light the sacred lamp for one day, but it burned eight days until relief arrived.

Another legend tells how in a little hill town

a homeless couple with tax problems took shelter in a stable among the animals and gave birth to a light that would change the world.

Let us pray.

Gentle God of love, help us reach out together for the light of faith,
for renewal and recovery and a new day coming.
Grant that hope may come to rest in our hearts,
and let it go forth with us into the darkness,
this night and in the nights to come, until we see the dawn.

Lighten our darkness, we beseech you, O God;
give us light in the night season; and by your great mercy
defend us from all perils and dangers of this night. Amen.

ANTHEM (*Trad. Appalachian*)

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but thou art mighty; hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more;
feed me till I want no more

Open now the crystal fountain whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer, be thou still my strength and shield;
be thou still my strength and shield.

(Tapers found near the Advent Wreath may be placed in the bowls with sand.)

PSALM 121 (*All read together.*)

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh from the Lord,
who hath made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved;
he that keepeth thee will not slumber;
behold, the God that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.
The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon at night.
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil and shall sustain thy soul.
He shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in,
from this time forth and even forevermore.

PRAYER (*All stand*)

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we thank you for your constant love
and for the blessings of this day.
We know that even when we cannot see or feel you, still you are there.
Help us to remember you and to listen for your voice
in the words of family, friends, and strangers.
Kindle our hearts and awaken hope, that we may know you
as you reveal yourself in the world and in our lives.
Let the light of your holy Spirit shine like these candles in the darkness,
lighting the way for all who feel despairing, lost, or forgotten,
and grant that it may come to dwell so deeply in our hearts
that when we leave this place it may shine on, for us
and for those we meet along the way. Amen.

HYMN (*Tune: Stille nacht*) (*Sung by all, standing.*)

Silent night, holy night,
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child,
Holy Infant, so tender and mild.
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heav'nly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

CONCLUDING PRAYERS *(Remain standing.)*

Let us pray.

Another day will come, O God.

**I know not what it may bring forth, but make me ready, God,
for whatever it may be.**

If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely.

If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly.

If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently.

And if I am to do nothing, help me do it gallantly.

**Make these words more than words,
and give me the Spirit of thy Peace. Amen.**

O God, support us all the day long in this troubled life,
until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is
hushed,
and the fever of life is over, and our work is done.
Then Lord, in thy mercy, grant us safe lodging,
and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen.

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

May the Lord bless you and protect you.

May the light of God's presence shine upon you and be gracious to you.

May the Lord bestow favor upon you and grant you wholeness and peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

People may greet one another in the name of the Lord.

There are many ways to support The Old Stone Church

Online Giving: oldstonechurch.org/giving/	Mobile Giving: Text the keyword "oldstonecle" to 73256
Mail to: Old Stone Church Attn: Financial Office 91 Public Square Cleveland, OH 44113	Checks should be made payable to "Old Stone Church." If you would like to designate your contribution to one of Old Stone's mission projects, please make a note on the memo line.

All contributions are tax-deductible and will be appropriately acknowledged at year-end.

THE OLD STONE CHURCH

LOVING CHRIST, SERVING CITY—SPIRITUALLY, SOCIALLY, CULTURALLY—SINCE 1820

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Music copied under ccli#1638695

Senior Pastor: Rev. Stephen C. Blonder Adams

Director of Music and Musical Arts: David C. Daugherty

The Old Stone Singers

Leah Jennings Brown, *soprano*

Ian Atwood, *tenor*

Cicely Schonberg, *soprano*

Frederick Peterbark, *tenor*

Val Sibila, *soprano*

Andrew J. Schoenhofer, *tenor*

Rayna Brooks, *alto*

R. Dominic Aragon, *bass*

McKenna Jones, *alto*

Joseph K. Breslau, *bass*

Emma Nossem, *alto*

Seth Hobi, *bass*

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Kara Bane
Willie Brown

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Robert Hubert Jr.
Judy Macuga
Harriet Niles
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