WELCOME!

We are glad you are worshiping with us today! Since our founding in the 1950s, we at Little River United Church of Christ (UCC) have been called by God to celebrate diversity, independent thought, and faithful action. This call led us to become racially integrated in the segregated Virginia of the 1950s. That same call led us in 2001 to become open to and affirming of LGBTQ+ folks, including full access to the rites of ordination and marriage. Today, we build on our heritage of proclaiming God’s radically inclusive love to our congregation, neighborhood, and world by nurturing individual and congregational spirituality, serving our community, and advocating for all God’s creatures and creation.

We’d love to have you join us in these sacred tasks! You may make your presence known by emailing us at office@lrucc.org. Welcome!

WORSHIP AND MEETING CHANGES IN RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS

We are excited to welcome members and friends for worship both in person and online (hybrid services). Masks are required for everyone attending worship in person at all times. All worship services are recorded and uploaded to YouTube for on-demand viewing. Those attending worship in-person (adults and children) may be seen attending and participating during the worship service.

Little River’s nursery welcomes infants through 4 years old on Sunday mornings (9:30–11:30 A.M.) with our devoted child care provider Yris Saenz. During the 10 A.M. Sunday worship, Sunday School is offered for 5 year olds through 12th grade. Pilgrim Youth Fellowship (PYF) is offered on select Sundays for 6th–12th grade. Please check with an usher for the location of classes.

SERVICE CREDITS

The liturgy for today is adapted from The Abingdon Worship Annual 2012 and the United Church of Christ Book of Worship, as well as From Generation to Generation by A Sanctified Art. Today’s hymns are used with permission, reprinted under Onelicense.net A-715105.

COMMUNICATIONS AT LITTLE RIVER UCC

Little River UCC produces a weekly e-newsletter, Current Tidings, and periodically sends out Alerts (emails with significant, time-sensitive information). All submissions for the weekly Bulletin, Current Tidings, and online Currents should be submitted to the office by Wednesdays at noon. We also send out a monthly print newsletter, Current Reflections. To receive any of these communications, please send an email to currents@lrucc.org or call the church office to give us your contact information.

STAFF AND PARTNERS

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Rev. Dr. Verne Arens, Pastor Emeritus
Rev. Hubert S. Beckwith, Founding Pastor
SERVICE OF CELEBRATION AND WORSHIP
CHRISTMAS EVE

Prelude

Flourish on ‘Adeste Fideles’
Tom Mitchell

Welcome

Rev. Dr. Arthur L. Cribbs, Jr.

Lighting of the Advent and Christ Candles
Ann and Tracy Lingo
Jan, Hazel, Samantha, Virginia, and Dale Curtis

Tonight, on this night of nights, we light the Christ candle,
because from generation to generation, we tell this story that belongs to God.
This is Christmas Eve! Thanks be to God. So tonight we light the Christ candle,
because from generation to generation, our story belongs to God.
Thanks be to God for a love like that.

Introit

Gaudete
arr. Michael Burkhardt
Sanctuary Choir

Call to Worship

Drew Nettinga

We come tonight because we believe that for generations
people have gathered together on this holy night,
because there is something about this story that speaks to the deepest parts of us.
We believe in bundling up this hope, this good news, and passing it on—
to our children, to our neighbors, and to the world around us.
We come tonight to tell this story—of a love that makes room for all.
We come to sing this story—of a love that knows our name.
We come to live this story—because love has come again.
We believe words have power.
We will not stay quiet.
Let us worship God.

Carol 165

Once in Royal David’s City
IRBY

(see back of bulletin for music insert)

Invocation

Drew Nettinga

From generation to generation, we tell this story of Christmas Eve and pray for
God’s intervention into our lives and tonight to fill us with holiness. We feel the
presence of Christ with us no matter where we go, no matter what we say, no
matter what we do, we belong to God. We have come on this night of nights to
celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with confidence God is with us and lives in us.
Amen.

Carol 148

O Come, All Ye Faithful
ADESTE FIDELES
CHRISTMAS LITANY

One: Every life in its particularity is precious to God, who came to us in a particular body, in a particular time.

All: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

One: Black lives, queer lives, Indigenous lives – these are precious to God.

All: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

One: Trans lives, Palestinian lives, neurodivergent lives – these are precious to God.

All: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

One: Undocumented lives, disabled lives, migrant lives – these are precious to God.

All: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

One: All who face oppression, discrimination, war, and tumult are precious.

All: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

One: All who are burdened by mental unhealth or by the stigma attached to it are precious.

All: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

One: All who find themselves outside of the inns of our society, lonely and outcast are precious.

All: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

One: All those who, like the shepherds, labor and especially those who labor during this day of celebration are precious.

All: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

One: Salvation is here!

All: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all!

Response

Ding, Dong! Ding, Dong! Michael Bedford
Children and Youth Ensemble

PASSING OF THE PEACE

Rev. Dr. Arthur L. Cribbs, Jr.

In Person: Please remain seated and wave or offer a peace sign

Online: Please type your words of peace in the chat box

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Rev. Dr. Arthur L. Cribbs, Jr.

O Holy God, we need this story—this Christmas story.
We need this story of ordinary people who were brave.
We need this story of love that changed the world.
We need this Christmas Eve story of angel choruses that give reason to hope,
and starlight that reminds us to look up.

In a battered and bruised world,
we gather around your Word as people gather around a fire to warm themselves.
So we are here, gathered together to warm ourselves by your light,
because we need this story.
We need the truth that lies deep in these holy words.
So tonight we pray: quiet our minds, open our hearts,
and kindle the fire within us. Amen.
# The Christmas Story

**The Prophecy**  
*Micah 5:2–5a*  
Fran DuRocher

**Anthem**  
*In the Bleak Mid-Winter*  
Sanctuary Choir  
arr. Harold Darke

**The Angel Appears to Joseph**  
*Matthew 1:18–21*  
Jean Wheelock

*Carol 149*  
*Angels from the Realms of Glory*  
REGENT SQUARE

**The Angel Gabriel Appears to Mary**  
*Matthew 1:18–21*  
Jean Wheelock

**Anthem**  
*Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*  
Sanctuary Choir  
arr. Andrew Risinger

**The Birth of Jesus**  
*Luke 2:1–7*  
Hutton Easley

*Carol 147*  
*Away in a Manger*  
AWAY IN A MANGER

**The Angels and Shepherds**  
*Luke 2:8–16*  
Lolly Easley

**Anthem**  
*Nativity Carol*  
Sanctuary Choir  
John Rutter

**The First Proclamation**  
*Luke 2:17–20*  
Michael Alt

**Anthem**  
*What Child Is This*  
Lizzie Madden, piano  
traditional

**The Word Dwells among Us**  
*John 1:1–14*  
Annelise Stapert

*Carol 150*  
*Hark the Herald Angels Sing*  
MENDELSSOHN

**Meditation**  
*“A Child Is Born”*  
Rev. Dr. Arthur L. Cribbs, Jr.

**Anthem**  
*I Wish I’d Been in Bethlehem*  
Natalie Sleeth  
Ally Macdonald, vocal solo
CALL TO OFFERING

Let us now prepare to bring our offerings. You may place your offering in the plate held by an usher as you leave. You may also give by mailing a check to the church or by visiting the Donate Online page on our website. Thank you for supporting the ministries, programs, and services of Little River.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Let us pray.
Receive these gifts of your people, and let them be used in service to those with needs and for the building up of ministries that serve the purpose for which they have been given. Amen.

DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures here below;
praise God above, ye heavenly host.

CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Author of our lives,
we admit that there is something so marvelous and wonderful about this night:
the glow of the candlelight, and the familiar hymns,
the kids that are wound tight with contagious, joyful energy,
the feeling that something we’ve been waiting for just might be within reach.

Joy and hope are in the air—
so thick we could almost bottle it up.

But we don’t want to bottle up this feeling; we want to share it.
We want to share the joy of this night
   with the children of this city,
   with single parents,
   with lonely young adults,
   with our unhoused neighbors,
   with those who are grieving;
   with people who couldn’t quite make it home for Christmas.

We want to share this hope with people who had imagined that this year would be different, that this year they would have what they were looking for. We want to share this night with families who couldn’t afford to put much under the tree, as well as with those who are new to this country—fleeing a life that was unsafe or unwelcoming.
We don’t want to bottle up the magic of this night; we want to share it.
We want to pour your good news all over this community.
We want to sing like Mary sang, until all who are looking for you
have found their way home.

So help us live like the shepherds—who weren’t afraid to go and tell the Good News.
Help us take the words of the angels to heart—to not be afraid.
Help us to be as trusting as Joseph—who chose to believe the impossible.

But more than anything give us the courage and conviction
to tell this story of a baby born in a manger.
The plot never changes. There are never any surprise twists.

We tell this story because our spirits need to hear it.
Over and over and over again, like water in the desert;
we need to be reminded that you, O God, have drawn close to this hurting world.
We need to be reminded that you, O God, just couldn’t stay away.
Deepen our faith and forgive our unbelief. Renew and revive our souls again.
Now, let us pray together the prayer Jesus taught his disciples.

THE LORD’S PRAYER

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.
   Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.
   Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

CANDLE LIGHTING

(SEE BACK OF BULLETIN FOR MUSIC INSERT)
Please keep lighted candles upright when passing the flame. Please extinguish your
candle after the Benediction and before you leave. A box will be near the main
sanctuary door to receive used candles.

BENEDICTION

Now, my sisters and brothers, let us go into the night on this night of nights.
Let us go and proclaim the Good News of Christ with us.
Let us go unafraid, unashamed, and unapologetic.
Let us go and be audacious, bodacious, and courageous. Amen.

POSTLUDE

Meditation on ‘Silent Night’    David Conte
**Christmas Offering**

Please consider donating this holiday season to the Christmas Offering which supports two endeavors. First, the Veteran of the Cross provides support to retired UCC clergy and lay employees in need of assistance.

Then, Little River’s Board of Outreach and Social Justice will designate recipients such as FISH (For Immediate Sympathetic Help) an ecumenical outreach program providing financial services such as rent/mortgage and utilities, and medical assistance in addition to food assistance.

Another BOSJ recipient has been Second Story which provides residential programs of housing, counseling and life skills support for teenagers and young people experiencing crisis and homelessness.

Your gifts give hope and make so much possible for those in need.

This special offering can be received through Sunday, December 25. The church will gladly receive contributions by mail, or through the online giving button on the website. Please make your check payable to Little River UCC with “Christmas Fund Offering” in the memo line. The Board of Outreach and Social Justice thanks you for your generosity!

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**Christmas Poinsettia Dedications 2022**

### Given by:
- Karen Flann
- Ruth Duncan
- Fran DuRocher
- Joyce Moncrieff
- Jane Wallace
- Janet Parsons Mackey
- Little River Church Staff

### In Memory of:
- Homer Schwartz
- Stuart C. Duncan (Husband)
- Siggi Moser (Wife)
- James Strawn Moncrieff (Husband)
- Joe Parry-Hill (Brother)

### Given by:
- Janet Parsons Mackey
- Little River Church Staff

### In Honor of:
- E. Dudley Parsons, III (Brother)
- Rev. Dr. Arthur Cribbs, Jr. For your calm and steady presence here at Little River Church, in God’s perfect timing.
165

Once in Royal David's City

1. Once in royal David's city stood a lowly
   cottage shed, where a mother laid her baby
   in a manger for his bed: Mary was that mother
   mild, Jesus Christ her little child.

2. Christ came down to earth from heaven, love incarnate
   for us all, and his shelter was a stable,
   and his cradle was a stall; with the poor, the scorned, the
   lowly, lived on earth our Savior holy.

3. Jesus is our childhood's pattern; day by day like
   us he grew, he was little, weak, and helpless,
   tears and smiles like us he knew. Thus he feels for all our
   sadness, and he shares in all our gladness.

4. And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re-
   on to the place where he is gone.
   And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re-
   And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re-

WORDS: Cecil F. Alexander, 1848, alt.
MUSIC: Henry John Gauntlett, 1849; harm. Arthur H. Mann, 1919

IRBY
87.87.77
1. O come, all ye faithful, joyful, and triumphant,
2. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
3. Child, for us sinners poor and in the manger,
4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born for our salvation,

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
we would embrace thee, with love and awe;
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;

Come and behold him, born the King of angels;
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;
who would not love thee, loving us so dearly?
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;

Descant

Refrain

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,

WORDS: John Francis Wade, 1743; tr. Frederick Oakeley, 1841, and others
MUSIC: John Francis Wade, 1743; desc. David Willcocks, 1961

ADESTE FIDELES
Irr. w. refrain

Desc. © 1961 Oxford University Press
let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!
Angels, from the Realms of Glory

1. Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
2. Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night,
3. Sages, leave your contemplations brighter visions beam afar;
4. Saints before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear,

you who sang creation's story, now proclaim Messiah's birth:
God with us is now residing, yonder shines the infant light:
seek the great Desire of nations, you have seen the natal star:
suddenly the Lord, descending, here among us shall appear:

Refrain

Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King.

WORDS: James Montgomery, 1816
MUSIC: Henry T. Smart, 1867
Away in a Manger

1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
2. The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
3. Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay close by me forever, and love me, I pray.

Jesus laid down his sweet head. The stars in the sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes. I love thee, Lord Je - sus, look down from the sky, and stay by my cra - dle till morn - ing is nigh.

thy ten - der care, and fit us for heav - en to live with thee there.

WORDS: Anonymous (19th century)  

Harm. © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, used by permission of Augsburg Fortress

AWAY IN A MANGER  
11 11.11 11  

Alt. tune: CRADLE SONG
1. Hark! the herald angels sing, 
   "Glory to the
   Righ-teous-ness!

2. Christ, by highest heaven adored; 
   Christ, the ev - er-
   He is risen with healing
   new-born King; peace on earth, and mer-cy mild,

3. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! 
   Hail the Sun of
   Righ-teous-ness! Light and life to all he brings,
   God and sin-ners
   last-ing Lord! Late in time behold him come,
   risen with heal-ing

   in his wings.
   His glo-ry by,

   rec-on-ciled!" Joy-ful, all ye na-tions, rise,
   Vir-gin's womb. Veiled in flesh the God-head see;

   in his wings, mild he lays his glo-ry by,
no more may die;

join the triumph of the skies;

hail the incarnate Deity, pleased in flesh

born that we no more may die, born to raise us

born to raise us from the earth to second birth.

host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.

from the earth, born to give us second birth.

Hark! the herald angels sing to the newborn King.

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"
1. Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright
2. Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight,
3. Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love’s pure light
4. Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light;

round yon virgin mother and child, holy infant so tender and mild,
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing alleluia;
radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
with the angels let us sing, alleluia to our King;

sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.
Christ, the Saviour, is born! Christ, the Saviour, is born!
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.
Christ, the Saviour, is born, Christ the Saviour, is born.

WORDS: Joseph Mohr, 1818; tr. John F. Young, 1863
MUSIC: Franz Gruber, 1818
STILLE NACHT
Irr.