



The Kenilworth Union Church

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www.kuc.org

Jane B. Lionberger
Associate Minister

Dr. Andrew Chaney
Senior Minister

Sarah E. Garcia
Associate Minister

Anne S. Faurot
Director of Children's Ministries

Dr. Gilbert W. Bowen
Minister Emeritus

Lisa R. Bond
Director of Music

The Service of Worship

Sunday, January 8, 2012

Communion Sunday and Epiphany Sunday

8:00 am Communion Service
9:00 and 10:30 am Worship Services & Sunday School

Prelude *Pastorale*.....Johann Sebastian Bach

Call to Worship and the Organ Meditation

DoxologyNo. 592

Responsive Reading

*Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel,
Who alone does wondrous things.
Blessed be his glorious name forever;
May his glory fill the whole earth.
Amen and Amen.*

Hymn "Brightest and Best of the Stars of the Morning"No. 67

Prayer of Affirmation

Open our eyes, Lord, to gently scan the life we lead,
the home we have, the world we inhabit and so to find
signs of hope we can fasten on and encourage. Show us
the world as in your sign, shot through with possibility for
recovery, renewal and redemption. Open our eyes, Lord,
to places where we can help, heal, confront, convert.
O come, O come, Immanuel.

First Scripture Lesson Isaiah 60: 1-6

Anthem *Star in the East*.....David Ashley White
Chancel Choir

Offertory *Alleluia!*.....Ferdinand Hummel
Kelli Harrington and Alyssa Bennett

Hymn of Dedication

We praise thee, O God, our Redeemer, Creator,
In grateful devotion our tribute we bring.
We lay it before thee, we kneel and adore thee,
We bless thy holy name, glad praises we sing.

Second Scripture Lesson Matthew 2: 1-12

Sermon "The Art of Possibility"Rev. Jane Lionberger

Invitation to the Table

Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God. They will come from east and west and from north and south and sit at table in the Kingdom of God.

See how good and pleasant it is when friends dwell together in unity.

The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and The Lord's Prayer

Sharing of the Elements *Thee We Adore*Ralph Johnson

Prayer

Closing Hymn "God of Our Life"No. 275

Choral Benediction *The Lord Bless You and Keep You*....P. Lutkin

Postlude *March of the Three Kings*.....Felix AlexandreGuilmant

Tamaron Conseur, M. M.
Asst. Dir. of Choirs

Dr. William Aylesworth
Guest Organist

Kelli Harrington, M. M.
Asst. Dir. of Rejoice and
Bell Choirs

USHERS

8:00 am
Phillis Dunbar

GREETERS

Laurie and
Scott Walker

Catherine and
Ed King

USHERS

9:00 am
Scott G. Walker
Rob Albertson
Fielden Fraley
Simon McMaster
Laurie Walker
Steve Hoopes

USHERS

10:30 am
John Stiffler
Diane Bruce
Rob Collins
Steve Hoffman
Adam LeFebvre
Jeff Salmon
Linda Salmon
Ronald M. Schutz

ALTAR GUILD

Bob Cannon
Bob Emerson

BUS ATTENDANT

Kitsy Bryant

A Stephen Ministry Congregation

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ALTAR FLOWERS: The altar flowers are given in loving memory of Franz and Elizabeth Palm and Walter and Rita Curtiss by their grandchildren, Tom Curtiss, David Curtiss, Ann Curtiss Emmerich and their families. The flowers in the lavabo are given in loving memory of Richard S. Davis by Inge; and son, Richard, daughter, Gillian, son-in-law, Marcus and grand-

daughter, Philippa Neupert.

MILESTONES: The wreath on the courtyard statue is given in honor of Rev. Jane Lionberger by the Knitting Ministry.

CELEBRATORY SEND-OFF FOR REV. JANE LIONBERGER, TODAY. Jane has lovingly and faithfully served

ANNOUNCEMENTS

(CONTINUED)

our KUC family for over six years. Please join us after the 10:30 service on Sunday, January 8 to thank Jane and to wish her Godspeed.

KUC'S NEW WEBSITE! Check out our new website at www.kuc.org! It is colorful, informative, and easy-to-navigate!

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOLERS! IMPACT Mission Trip Orientation for participants and parents is in the Culbertson Room on January 8 at 7 pm. For more information, email sgarcia@kuc.org.

INTERMEDIATE BRIDGE PLAYERS NEEDED: Join us for bridge on Tuesday, January 10, 1-4 pm at KUC. We play four-hand bridge, Chicago scoring, assuming knowledge of beginner conventions. Please contact Eva Sorock for more information or to sign up, e.sorock@gmail.com.

RUMMAGE DROP-OFF FOR FRENCH ROOM ONLY, JAN. 15: We are accepting items for the French Room on Sunday, January 15, in the library.

KUC WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY: If you have ever thought about participating in our Women's Bible study, now is the perfect time to sign up! We are starting a new 9-week session on January 11. Come listen, study, share, and grow in fellowship as we explore the study of David together. There will be a day and evening group. Please email Traci Groff with any questions, tracigroff@comcast.net.

KIDS4KIDS CLUB NIGHT: Club Night is for 1st-6th graders, Tuesday, January 17, 4:15-6:00 pm. Please RSVP to Laurel Lien, llien@kuc.org. Join us for fellowship and service! The cost is \$10.

"LOVE IN THE TIME OF BLACKBERRY", January 18, 7 to 9 pm at KUC: Come to this Alison Tobey Smart Memorial Fund presentation by Dr. Cheryl Rampage, Senior Vice President for Programs and Academic Affairs at the Family Institute of Northwestern University. Bring a friend!

**SAVE THE DATES:
WINTER WARM-UP SUPPER,**

Sunday, January 22, 5 pm is our annual Winter Warm-up Soup Supper. This is a fundraiser for the high school mission trip to New Orleans. Tickets are \$8 per person or \$20 per family, and can be purchased from Mission Trip participants, at the front desk or via the link on www.kuc.org.

KUC WRITER'S GATHERING: If you have written a book, screenplay, or picture yourself as a contest creator, or you are just thinking of one of these fun projects, come to the Culbertson Room on Tuesday, January 24 (9 to 10:30 am). Please RSVP to Sallie Smith, sly2k@yahoo.com.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PARENT SOCIAL, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2012, "Tables for Eight" potluck style dinners for Sunday School parents. Please contact Laura McColl for more information, m.mccoll@sbcglobal.net.

JR. & SR. HIGH SKI AND SNOWBOARD TRIP! 2012 is the 5th anniversary of Deep Freeze! Come join the fun, Feb.17-19. Registrations are due Feb. 1. Email silvi@kuc.org or visit www.kuc.org for a link to registration.

THE GREATEST TALENT & ART SHOW ON EARTH will be Sunday afternoon, Feb. 26 at the Kenilworth Club. To sign up to perform your talent or tell a joke, show your art work or be a part of the committee, contact Sallie Smith at sly2k@yahoo.com.

Preaching Schedule

Jan. 15-Dr. Chaney
Jan. 22-Dr. Chaney
Jan. 29-Dr. Chaney
Feb. 5-Gospel Sunday
Feb. 12-Dr. Chaney
Feb. 19-Dr. Chaney

Please turn off all electronic devices while attending services. Thank you.

The Care Guild Leader for January is Lyn Little. To volunteer or to let us know where help is needed, please call the Care Guild number at (847) 853-3534 or email careguild@kuc.org.

Rev. Sarah Garcia

"God's Choice"

Luke 2: 1-20 (excerpts)

The Birth of Jesus

"Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth to Bethlehem. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed."

Chances are, this is not the first time you are hearing this story. It is one of the best known stories of the Bible. I invite you to picture it in your mind. What do you treasure about this tableau? What do you find yourself connecting to most about this story? When you read a favorite story to a child who has memorized it, you will see that they notice and get quite fussy if you skip any parts of the story or if you try to change it. In that same way, people have a strong attachment to the Christmas story. The way they have envisioned it for years is the way they want to keep seeing it. There is something very comforting about hearing the same story over and over again and having a sense of its continuity and timelessness.

Recently when I was studying this text, the difference between the classic story that I have in my head and the words of the Bible stood out to me more than ever. I was reminded that it does not say stable anywhere in the passage from Luke. Where exactly Mary gave birth is not clear. We only know that she laid Jesus in a manger because there was no room in the inn. There is no innkeeper who tells them there is no room and there are a number of scholars who contend that inn is a mistranslation. The word translated as "inn" is the word *kataluma*, which is used elsewhere by Luke and translated as "guest chamber" or "upper room." Some scholars say that Mary and Joseph were not turned away from an inn, but they were told there was no room in Joseph's family's home. Bethlehem was after all the town that he came from and so one can assume he still had family there and that was why he had to go there to be registered. If so, why wouldn't they have taken him in to their guest room? Were they disapproving of his unmarried, preg-

nant bride to be? We gain a sense of Mary and Joseph facing rejection and it makes Jesus' birth that much more interesting to imagine him being born where the animals were kept, not just because there was no room but because his parents were social outcasts. This emphasizes for us the humility of Jesus the Christ's birth. It makes the birth even more remarkable.

When we really think about it, we are talking about God being born into the world. Jesus is God with us, Emmanuel. This story has so much to inspire us about our faith and our God. We see throughout the Old Testament that God has been trying to communicate with humanity in many different ways and finally here in the beginning of the New Testament, God actually comes to earth in human form. God could have chosen to be born to a princess but he chooses humble, young and unmarried Mary. Mary is just a girl, barely past her childhood and then told that she is going to have a child by the Holy Spirit. She is going to be the god-bearer. What a huge responsibility. What an honor.

I remember when I was in 8th grade, I was asked to be Mary in our church's nativity service. In my church we had actual babies play Jesus. I was very nervous about holding the baby and trying to make sure the baby did not get upset during the service. The mom sat nearby me in the front row ready to swoop in in case of a catastrophe, but all went well, in spite of the baby pulling off my headpiece and Joseph's fake beard. Things went so well in fact that afterwards people in the church came up to me and asked me if the baby was mine. I have a vivid memory of being shocked that they would ask me that. Couldn't they see that I was too young to have a baby? And there I find myself identifying with Mary.

How could God think she was ready to have a baby, and not just any baby but the Messiah? How did God know she was the right one to bear the savior? Scripture tells us that she had found favor with God. I invite all of us to imagine what it would be like to hear that God has found favor with you and told you that you were going to be part of bringing God into the world.

When I was in seminary one day my systematic theology professor came in to class and said that God had spoken to her on her way there and God wanted the class to know that God was pleased with us. She asked us to try to take that in. What did it feel like for God to be pleased with you? It felt good. Smiles spread across the people's faces and the energy in the room lifted. To allow yourself to feel cared for by God is powerful.

When we look at the Christmas story, we see who God chooses, and if we look closely enough we see that God chooses us. We are part of that nativity picture. When we celebrate our homemade nativity with the children on Christmas Eve, we invite everyone to the manger. Children wear construction hats and angel outfits, cow ears and shepherd cloaks. The message is that everyone is called. Everyone has a place with Jesus. It is not really important if we envision a stable or an inn. The exact details are not as significant as what we capture in the overall picture. People struggle with details. They feel like if they know exactly what happened then they will find the truth. What is the truth we are searching for this Christmas? Is it the certainty of the facts of the story? Or is it the mystery and beauty of God's love?

God chooses each of us.

God chooses you.

And God came into the world in human form to stand in flesh and blood and say in our words that God is with us, that we are loved, and we are called to share that love in the world. May your heart be filled with this truly good news this Christmas and all year long.

Amen.

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