



Service for the Lord's Day

1st Sunday of Christmas

A Service of *Quiet Reflection, Prayer and Readings*

December 31, 2023

10:00 a.m.

Please SILENCE ALL Personal Electronic Devices Before Worship.

We Gather as God's People

Welcome to our worship service. Take a moment to quiet yourself as we prepare ourselves for worship.

Where there is no way,
no path, no road made plain,
may there be wise ones
who inspire you to see
where the way could begin.
(Jan Richardson)

The Gathering Music .. "Some Children See Him / I Wonder as I Wander" –arr. Schaum
"Wexford Carol" – arr. Lorie Line

The Welcome

(We gather on this day, at the ending of a year, to quietly reflect on the events and experiences of the year behind us, while silently and prayerfully looking forward to the new year before us. During this time, we will share some poems, scriptures, prayers, and music to assist us in our meditation and reflection together.)

The Prelude "What Child Is This / Mary Did You Know" – arr. Rouse

The Call to Worship [Responsive]

One: The Peace of Christ be with you.

***Many:* And also with you.**

One: Here at this beginning of a new year, be there delight or be there grief, may grace come to greet you and keep you company in the way you go.

***Many:* Amen.**

A Reading from John O'Donohue "At the End of the Year"

As this year draws to its end,
We give thanks for the gifts it brought
And how they became inlaid within
Where neither time nor tide can touch them.

The days when the veil lifted
And the soul could see delight;
When a quiver caressed the heart
In the sheer exuberance of being here.
Surprises that came awake
In forgotten corners of old fields
Where expectation seemed to have quenched.
The slow, brooding times
When all was awkward
And the wave in the mind
Pierced every sore with salt.
The darkened days that stopped
The confidence of the dawn.
Days when beloved faces shone brighter
With light from beyond themselves;
And from the granite of some secret sorrow
A stream of buried tears loosened.
We bless this year for all we learned,
For all we loved and lost
And for the quiet way it brought us
Nearer to our invisible destination.

A Time of Silence for Prayer

The Musical Reflection “To Shepherds as They Watched” – arr. Floeter

A Blessing by Jan Richardson

For you, for as we prepare to enter a new year: a blessing that has been waiting for you to arrive. As we cross into 2024, may we find it—and make it—a welcoming kind of year. Blessings!

BLESSING THE THRESHOLD

This blessing has been waiting for you
for a long time.
While you have been making your way here,
this blessing has been gathering itself,
making ready, biding its time, praying.
This blessing has been polishing the door,
oiling the hinges, sweeping the steps,
lighting candles in the windows.
This blessing has been setting the table
as it hums a tune from an old song it knows,
something about a spiraling road and bread
and grace.
All this time it has kept an eye on the horizon,
watching, keeping vigil,
hardly aware of how it was leaning itself
in your direction.

And now that you are here, this blessing
can hardly believe its good fortune
that you have finally arrived, that it can drop everything
at last to fling its arms wide to you, crying
welcome,
welcome,
welcome.

A Time for Silent Prayer and Reflection

The Poem “January’s Song” by Ann Weems

There is a rumor on the streets that Christmas is over.
Lights and ornaments are packed away, trees dragged to the curb,
people back to business as usual.
We’re no longer in the party mood; the humbug is back in vogue.

This is January ... How can Christmas be over?!
The Child is just newborn, the song of Peace and Goodwill still rings in our ears.
The shepherds and sages still kneel to this One who is born to us ... just born to us!

How can Christmas be over?? The story of the gospel is just beginning.
We who saw the Star now live in its Light. We who saw and heard now believe.

Christmas is not over. We’re just beginning to follow this One who calls
us now to Live in the Light of Love.
Christmas is not over. It’s just beginning and this is January’s song.

A Time for Silent Prayer and Reflection

The Scripture Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 *From Priests for Equality. The Inclusive Bible*

There is a time for everything, a season for every purpose under heaven:
a season to be born and a season to die;
a season to plant and a season to harvest;
a season to hurt and a season to heal;
a season to tear down and a season to build up;
a season to cry and a season to laugh;
a season to mourn and a season to dance;
a season to scatter stones and a season gather them;
a season for holding close and a season for holding back;
a season to seek and a season to lose;
a season to keep and a season throw away;
a season to tear and a season to mend;
a season to be silent and a season to speak;
a season to love and a season to hate;
a season for hostilities and a season for peace.

The Time for Reflection and Silent Prayer

A Reading from John O'Donohue "For the Traveler"

Every time you leave home,
Another road takes you
Into a world you were never in.

New strangers on other paths await.
New places that have never seen you
Will startle a little at your entry.
Old places that know you well
Will pretend nothing
Changed since your last visit.

When you travel, you find yourself
Alone in a different way,
More attentive now
To the self you bring along,
Your more subtle eye watching
You abroad; and how what meets you
Touches that part of the heart
That lies low at home:

How you unexpectedly attune
To the timbre in some voice,
Opening in conversation
You want to take in
To where your longing
Has pressed hard enough
Inward, on some unsaid dark,
To create a crystal of insight
You could not have known
You needed
To illuminate
Your way.

When you travel,
A new silence
Goes with you,
And if you listen,
You will hear
What your heart would
Love to say.

A journey can become a sacred thing:
Make sure, before you go,
To take the time
To bless your going forth,
To free your heart of ballast
So that the compass of your soul
Might direct you toward
The territories of spirit
Where you will discover
More of your hidden life,
And the urgencies
That deserve to claim you.

May you travel in an awakened way,
Gathered wisely into your inner
ground;
That you may not waste the invitations
Which wait along the way to transform
you.

May you travel safely, arrive
refreshed,
And live your time away to its fullest;
Return home more enriched, and free
To balance the gift of days which call
you.

The Musical Reflection "Coventry Carol" – arr. Purifoy

The Poem “The Journey” by Mary Oliver

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice –
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
“Mend my life!”
each voice cried.
But you didn’t stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers
at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
was terrible.

It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voice behind,
the start began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do
determined to save
the only life that you could save.

The Musical Reflection “In the Bleak Midwinter” – arr. Smith

The Sending [Responsive] Rev. Hugh Drennan

One: Friends, as 2023 comes to an end, and the new year, 2024 lies before us, we share this blessing together: May your eyes be opened to the wonder of the daily miracles around you and your sense of mystery be deepened.

Many: May we be aware of the light that shines in the darkness, and that the darkness can never put it out.

One: May you be blessed with companions on the journey, friends who will listen to you and encourage you with their presence.

Many: May we learn to live with what is unsolved in our hearts, daring to the face the questions and holding them until, one day, they find their answers.

One: May you find the still, quiet place inside yourself where you can know and experience the peace that passes all understanding.

Many: May love flow in us and through us to those who need your care.

One: May you continue to dream dreams and to reach out into the future with a deeper understanding of God’s way for you.

Many: Amen.

Postlude “Go Tell It on the Mountain” – arr. Carter



Our liturgy this morning is from: A Reading ~ (c) John O’Donohue [To Bless The Space Between](#).

Oakland Cambridge Presbyterian Church is committed to using language in such a way that all members of the community of faith may recognize themselves to be included, addressed, and equally cherished before God. Seeking to bear witness to the whole world, the church struggles to use language which is faithful to the biblical truth and which neither purposefully nor inadvertently excludes people because of gender, color, or other circumstance in life. (Book of Order, W-1.2006)

Thank you to everyone who helped to make our sanctuary look beautiful for the Advent and Christmas season! We will be taking down the decorations on Saturday, January 6 at 9 a.m. Your help would be most appreciated! Also, please TAKE YOUR POINSETTIAS HOME.

- Today we welcome our Guest Preacher Rev. Hugh Drennan. Hugh, a previous pastor here, is now retired and lives in Lake Mills, Wisconsin. On his retirement business card the heading reads, “At play in the fields of the Lord.” That means he plays a lot of golf among other things.
- Our musician today is Karen Brunk.

ANNOUNCEMENTS —

- **Please pick up your 2024 Offering Envelopes, now available in Fellowship Hall. If we’ve missed your name, please notify the office.**
- If you would like to be added to the mailing list for our newsletter, *The Good News*, please send either your email (preferred) or snail mail address to the church office. (Our addresses are listed on the last page of the bulletin.)
- Help us save “pig dollars.” For us to receive a rebate, please turn in your receipts from the Cambridge Piggly Wiggly in one of three ways: **1.** Place them in the brown bag in the narthex. **2.** Cheryl Stitz will do a porch pickup of any receipts that you may have. Call her at 608-695-1838 to make arrangements. **3.** Receipts can also be mailed to the church office. All funds received are used for mission projects.

WORSHIP SERVICES UPDATE:

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, JANUARY 7 WORSHIP WITH COMMUNION AT 10 AM

— In-person worship continues this Sunday in the sanctuary. Spread God’s Love not the Cold and Flu! We are being reminded by health officials that with the rise in cases of respiratory illnesses, to once again pay attention to our own health and the health of our neighbors. We continue to have hand-sanitizer, offer masks for those who wish to wear them, and provide an online option of Facebook live for you to join us for worship if you are not feeling well.

Cambridge Food Pantry

WISH LIST



Cereal
Hearty Soups
Canned Meals (Ravioli, etc.)
Instant Potatoes
Corned Beef Hash
Hamburger Helper
Salad Dressing
Ketchup
Cake Mix and Frosting
Sugar
Shampoo and Conditioner

A drop box is located outside
the food pantry doors for
your donations.



Thank
YOU!

PLEASE HOLD THESE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS IN PRAYER THIS WEEK —

Dale Febock
Jan & Nancy Kristiansen
Marilyn Schuster
Dick Trailer

Those suffering from the conflict and humanitarian crises in the Middle East and violence around the world and here in America.

Those recovering from fire and storm damage across the United States.

The families of: Sylvia Jensen; Fred Trailer (Dick's brother); Stub Lund; Barbara Baker (Judy Pearson's sister); Betty Mennenga (mother of Angie Williams), and other families who are grieving the loss of loved ones.

If you would like to be added to our weekly prayer list, please leave word in the church office or contact the pastor. Permission to be included in this publicly posted list has been obtained from those listed or their families.

Church Schedule

Worship Service: 10:00 a.m. Sunday

Communion: First Sunday of each month

Pastoral Office Hours: Generally 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Wednesday or by appointment

Business Office Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Monday – Thursday

(Church hours are approved by Session and posted on church entry doors.)

Telephone/Fax: 608-423-3001

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Web: www.OCPChurch.com

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Visit us on Facebook: Oakland-Cambridge Presbyterian Church

SESSION (Meets the second Sunday of each month.)

Class of 2024: Mare Stewart, Mark Touhey

Class of 2025: Joe Leto, Melanie Rumpf

Class of 2026: Randy Johnson.

CHURCH STAFF

Music—

Accompanists: Karen Brunk, Marian Korth, Angie Williams

Business Manager: Ruth Poole

Pastor: Pastor Scott Marrese-Wheeler: (608) 417-0231 cell;

Pastor@OCPChurch.com

Facebook: Scott Marrese-Wheeler

