

First Sunday of Christmas – December 27, 2015
Homer Congregational United Church of Christ

For Quiet Meditation

*Welcome, Christmas, bring your cheer. Cheer to all Whos far and near.
Christmas Day is in our grasp, so long as we have hands to clasp.
Christmas Day will always be just as long as we have we.
Welcome Christmas while we stand, heart to heart, and hand in hand.*
~ from "How The Grinch Stole Christmas"

WE GATHER

Welcome & Announcements

The Story Re-told as We light the Christ Candle

Luke 2:1-7

Call to Worship

One: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light:

Many: in the crying of a baby.

One: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light:

Many: in the signature of a star.

One: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light:

Many: in the surround sound from the sky.

One: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light:

Many: in the purple, pink and white candles of the wreath.

One: May people who walk in darkness today

Many: see the light of hope that shines through our lives.

*Hymn

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

#148, vs. 1, 2

*A Time of Silence followed by our Prayer of Preparation (*let us pray together . . .*)

O God, already we have begun to put aside the news of Christ's birth as though it were not the good news of the ages. Already we are mentally packing the Christ Child away with the ornaments and the lights. Already we are preparing for tomorrow and a return to "life as usual." Forgive us, for we easily fall back into the same patterns as before the good news of Christmas was proclaimed to us. Help us to find both the faith and the will to live as those who have not only heard but believed in your salvation. Amen.

*Words of God's Enduring Love

One: The good news is that God loves us just the way we are. Even better news is that God loves us too much to let us stay like we are. By the grace of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and made whole. What cause for adoration and celebration!

Many: GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST!

*RESPONSE

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Glo-ri-a in ex-cel-sis De-o;

Glo-ri-a in ex-cel-sis De-o

GOD'S WORD BOTH ANCIENT AND NEW

Witness from the Ancient Text

Isaiah 9:6-7

Olyvia's Gift

"Arioso" from Cantata 156

Bach

Witness from the Ancient Text

Luke 2:8-14

Song

"O Holy Night"

a gift to Bill M., Carol CC, Gail V.,

**O Holy Night The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and e'er pining
'Til He appeared and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees O hear the angels voices.
O night divine O night when Christ was born
O night divine, O night, O night divine.**

**Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming,
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,
Here came the wise men from Orient land.
The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger;
In all our trials born to be our friend.
He knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger,
Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend!
Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend!**

**Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother;
And in His name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
Let all within us praise His holy name.
Christ is the Lord! O praise His Name forever,
His power and glory evermore proclaim.
O night divine, O night, O night divine!**

God is still speaking – through Frederick Buechner, on "Peace"

Children's Moment

Dona Nobis Pacem

with Leslie, Belinda, Sylvia, Vicki, Evan, Kenian and Molly

WE CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS

Lighting the Candles

When the month of YOUR birth is acknowledged, you are invited to move to the first pew, where others born in the same month will join you for a moment of quiet prayer. If you wish to offer a gift to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, you may leave your gift in the basket.

Carols – two verses, each

#147 Away in a Manger ~ *a gift to Bill & Dorothy H.*

#155 Angels We Have Heard on High ~ *a gift to Gary H. & Bonnie H.*

#145 Silent Night (vs. 3 & 4) ~ *a gift to Miles D.*

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S BLESSINGS

We Share in Prayer

We Offer our Gifts:

Invitation

Offertory

Doxology (sung to the tune of "Away in a Manger")

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,

Praise God all creatures here below,

Praise God above, ye heavenly hosts,

Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost.

Prayer of Dedication (*Let us pray together...*)

Wrap us in the shawl of compassion, God of holiness, so that this season of goodness and giving might last longer than the after-Christmas sales. We trust that these gifts will provide your love, grace and peace with justice to our world. Amen.

Song

"Happy Birthday"

As we sing, the children will come forward to blow out the candles!

WE DEPART TO BE GOD'S PEOPLE OF PEACE

Hymn #143

Joy to the World ~ *a gift to Dottie K. & Karen D.*

Blessing & Benediction

Postlude

Join us in the Russell Fellowship Hall for some birthday cake!

Today we are grateful for those who have participated in our worship experience. Thanks to Belinda, Evan, Karen, KJ, Leslie, Molly, Olivia and Sylvia. We are also grateful for the goodies that Joanne Cincotta provides for our coffee hour. Welcome Christmas while we stand, heart to heart and hand in hand!

Coming Up:

The **Epiphany Choir Festival** is next Sunday, January 3 at Grace and Holy Spirit Church. Join us at 3 PM in the beauty of that sanctuary to hear our area choirs offer their gifts of music. A free-will offering will be received, and a reception will follow.

The **Financial Secretary's office** will be open Thursday, **December 31**, 10:00 am until Noon. The books will be closed for the year 2015 at that time.

Stewardship Update – We give thanks for the 59 pledges toward Homer Congregational Church's 2016 budget received so far for \$89,798 (\$76,769 for operating expenses and \$13,029 for missions). We continue to receive pledges, either in the offering plate on Sunday or mailed to the church office. If you need a pledge card contact the office. Thank you! ~ *Your Stewardship Committee*

Next Sunday, our worship experience will be led by the Rev. John Hottenstein. The New Year begins with a service of communion. Please remember that there is room for everyone around our table.

January 10, Rev. Vicki Johnson will lead our worship. Based on texts from Isaiah and Luke, her sermon is "Epiphany in the Wilderness".

All **Annual Reports** are due in the office on **Monday, January 11**, so that completed reports can be made available on Sunday, January 17. The Annual Meeting will be Sunday, January 24.

As we begin, if you were born in **January**, we invite you to come forward and sit in the front pews. If you wish to offer a gift to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, there is a special basket in the middle of each pew where you may leave your gift.

allow time for people to come forward...

We light a candle for each one of you and we remember the children who were baptized this year, praying that all children may be able to grow up receiving attention and affection. This moment of silence is for your own prayers, even as the congregation prays a blessing upon each of you.

silence is kept...

Go in peace.

If you were born in **February**, please come forward.

We light a candle for each one of you, and to remember all those who we love – the ones who care the most for us, and who share our daily living at home, school and work. We will be in silence as you pray, and as we pray a blessing upon you.

silence is kept...

Go in peace.

If you were born in **March**, please come forward.

We light a candle for you, and to remember all who have died this year. We light this same candle for all who mourn recent losses and losses of many years. We light this candle acknowledging that the seasons of winter eventually lead to spring. In hope, we invite you to pray in silence.

silence is kept...

Go in peace.

Those born in the beautiful month of **April**, please come forward.
We light this candle for you, and to remember all the marvelous things we have experienced this past year. For greater and smaller moments this light beams into the new year, that we may recall wonder and joy in the days ahead. God hears your silent prayers and our blessings.

silence is kept...

Go in peace.

If you were born in **May**, please come forward.

We light this candle for each one of you, and commemorate all the people, near and far, who live under war and have suffered under violence and uncertainty. It is our God who offers comfort and hope. As we do at the end of May, we remember those who have died in service to their country. Now we offer silent prayers and blessings.

silence is kept...

Go in peace.

Those born in the month of **June** may come to the front pews.

We light a candle celebrate you and to remember all those, who celebrated weddings this year or who have celebrated wedding anniversaries, both those newly wed and those who have celebrated many years together. Now you may offer your own prayers as your family of faith prays blessing upon each one of you.

silence is kept...

Go in peace.

If you were born in **July** please come forward.

We light this candle for you and those who struggle to find freedom from personal shortcomings, despair, things that allure us and then disappoint us. May this light stand as our full longing for justice with peace in our lives, community, and in all creation. Spend some time in silent prayer, as we, also, pray blessing upon you.

silence is kept...

Go in peace

If you were born in **August** please come forward.

We light this candle for you and for the children of our community who join us for Vacation Bible School, as well as the team who leads this important ministry. We also remember those who plan and attend Chautauqua. Offer your prayers now.

silence is kept...

Go in peace

If you were born in **September** please come forward.

This candle is lit for you and for teachers in our community who offer their skills and shape our children, youth and young adults. We thank God for school psychologists and janitors and secretaries and cafeteria workers and professors. We long for the day when education is offered to all people around the globe. God now hears your prayers and our blessings.

silence is kept...

Go in peace

Those born in the month of **October** may come to the front pews.

We light this candle for you, for this congregation and for the church universal. When we receive communion in October, we are mindful of Christians around the planet who also gather around the table. May we be light and leaven, growing in love with God's presence and deepening our compassion for others. You may offer your own silent prayers while others offer a blessing upon you.

silence is kept...

Go in peace

If you were born in **November** please come forward.

We light this candle for you and we give thanks for all of our blessings. We have plenty to eat, marvelous clean water and shelter to keep us warm. As we acknowledge our blessings, may we resolve to greet the strangers among us and offer food, drink, welcome, clothing and care. You may turn to God and offer your own prayers.

And last but not least, those born in the month of **December**, come and join us.

We light this candle for you and to remember the greatest gift that came to us as the child of refugees. Born in the lowliest of settings, God came to walk among us and offer light for all time. With the angels, we do sing joy to the world. Take a moment to offer your prayers and we will pray God's blessing upon each one of you.

silence is kept...

Go in peace to be God's *Shalom!* to the world.