



**IMMANUEL CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST**

1 Hovey Street • Oxford, MI 48371

www.icucc.org • 248-628-1610

December 21, 2025 • 11:00 a.m.



Welcome to worship at Immanuel United Church of Christ!

God is Still Speaking,

Immanuel Open and Affirming Statement:

We welcome and affirm all people in celebrating diversity. We welcome to our faith family people of every race, age, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability and those who have doubts or questions.

Thank You for taking the time to turn off your cell phone during the worship service.

Prelude

*Bringing in the Light of Christ

(* denotes those who are able may stand.)

Ringin of the Bell

Welcome

Jeff Erno

Advent Candle Lighting

Week 4 – LOVE

One: Advent is a time of wonder – the wonder of the Light of the world. On this fourth Sunday of Advent, we light this candle for love and we wonder...

All: "How can we find love in a world broken and divided by hatred and violence?"

One: We light this candle for love and we wonder...

All: "God's love has found us!"

One: We light this candle for love

All: And we know the Light of the world illumines our lives with love, that we might see and walk the path of justice and peace.

Choir Anthem "Were You There on that Christmas Night"

Immanuel Choir

Children's Message

Pastor Liz Wilson

***Call to Worship**

Roxanne Todd, Liturgist

One: The signs are there: God's love comes again, showering us with the light of Christ!

Many: O Lord God of hosts, let your face shine, that we may be saved.

One: With anticipation of the divine, we remain expectant and marvel at the steadfast faith of Mary and Joseph.

Many: O Lord God of hosts, let your face shine, that we may be saved.

One: The time is nearly upon us. Preparations are almost complete. Are we ready for change?

Many: O Lord God of hosts, let your face shine, that we may be saved.

One: Worship and praise God for these signs of hope and love!

Many: O Lord God of hosts, let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Invocation

Jeff Erno

In this season of love, hope, and family, grant us joy and peace this day. You offered signs to Joseph and Mary long ago – signs that their son would be the Messiah, Emmanuel. May your light shine on us here, that we might understand the signs in our lives. We come with open hearts and minds to hear of your love coming into the world. We come to hear of a young woman with child, a foster father with trust in God, a match you made in heaven to shepherd a tiny boy to his destiny. Holy God, show us your peace as we make ready for your light in the world!

***Hymn: "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"**

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Words of Assurance

Jeff Erno

The king of love comes for all! With tears wiped away and replaced with joy, delight in preparing for the imminent arrival of the Son of God. We are all called by God, forgiven, cleansed, and made free.

The Congregation Prays

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Roxanne Todd, Liturgist

Congregational Response: "Lord hear our prayers." (Response after each Prayer request)

Silent Meditation

Pastoral Prayer

Jeff Erno

The Lord's Prayer: (use words most comfortable for you)

Roxanne Todd, Liturgist

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. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 7:14

Matthew 1:18-25

Luke 2:8-14

Roxanne Todd, Liturgist
Page 636 Old Testament
Page 1 New Testament
Page 58 New Testament

Sermon: "Love Incarnate"

Jeff Erno

***Hymn: "Joy to the World"**

Page 4

Stewardship Message

Announcements

(Be sure to read about up-coming events in the back of the bulletin.)

Offering:

Offertory

***Doxology:** (The tune is found on page 356 of your red hymnal.)

PRAISE GOD, FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW...

PRAISE GOD, ALL CREATURES HERE BELOW...

PRAISE GOD, ABOVE, YOU HEAVENLY HOST...

CREATOR, CHRIST AND HOLY GHOST...AMEN.

CREATOR, CHRIST AND HOLY GHOST...AMEN.

1 It came up-on the mid - night clear, that glo - rious song of old,
 2 Still through the clo - ven skies they come, with peace-ful wings un - furled,
 3 And you, be-neath life's crush-ing load, whose forms are bend-ing low,
 4 For lo, the days are hasten-ing on, by proph-et bards fore - told,

from an - gels bend - ing near the earth to touch their harps of gold;
 and still their heaven-ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world;
 who toil a - long the climb-ing way, with pain - ful steps and slow,
 when with the ev - er - cir - cling years comes round the age of gold;

"Peace on the earth, good will to all, great news of joy we bring."
 A - bove its sad and low - ly plains they bend on hover-ing wing,
 Look now, for glad and gold-en hours come swift - ly on the wing;
 When peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen-dors fling,

The world in sol - emn still-ness lay to hear the an - gels sing.
 and ev - er o'er its Ba - bel sounds the bless-ed an - gels sing.
 O rest be - side the wea - ry road, and hear the an - gels sing!
 and all the world send back the song which now the an - gels sing.

Edmund Sears, a Unitarian minister who served a number of congregations in the Boston area, wrote this Christmas hymn emphasizing the social implications of the Gospel for his congregation at Weyland, Massachusetts.

Tune: CAROL C.M.D.
 Richard S. Willis, 1850

Joy to the World!

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Isaac Watts, 1719; alt.

Ps. 98:4-9; Luke 2:11-15

1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth its
 2 Joy to the earth! the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their
 3 Christ rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the

prais - es bring; Let ev - ery heart pre - pare Christ room,
 songs em - ploy; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 na - tions prove The glo - ries of God's righ - teous - ness

and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 and won - ders of God's love, and won - ders of God's

and heaven and na - ture sing, and
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, and
 and won - ders of God's love, and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of God's love.

heaven and na - ture sing,
 peat the sound - ing joy,
 won - ders of God's love,

Stanza 1 may be sung, "Joy to the world! the Sovereign comes: . . ."

Isaac Watts, an English Congregationalist, freely paraphrased Old Testament psalms to glorify Christ and here develops a hymn of advent and nativity from a psalm

Prayer of Dedication of Gifts and Self

Jeff Erno

Lord of Heaven, accept these gifts from our hearts, that they may fulfill the purposes of your people. As Christ's light shines upon us, we rejoice in the opportunity to share our abundance with others. Bless these offerings to the Christ child and to our resurrected Lord.

***Hymn: "Good Christian Friends Rejoice"**

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*The Light of Christ goes into the world

***Benediction:**

Jeff Erno

One: Go in faith and anticipation of the greatest gift of all.

Many: Christ, the Light of the World, will restore us to love, hope, and peace.

One: Emmanuel, God with us, will be with us again.

Many: With faithful obedience encouraging us, let us happily await the days ahead.

One: Go in joy to spread signs of God's good news.

ALL: AMEN

Please wait to exit unit after the recessional.

Grace for fellowship hour

Jeff Erno

***Postlude**

We scatter to serve*****

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Join together for refreshments in Fellowship

In Worship and Service Today

Sermon: Jeff Erno

Liturgist: Roxanne Todd

Children's Message: Pastor Liz Wilson

Choir Director: Ken Martin

Accompanist: Ann McKinley

Our Tech team: Tammy & Ken Martin

Floral Arrangements: A gift created by Amy Wilson

Ministers: All the Immanuel Church faith community

Sunday School: Amy Wilson, Liz Wilson, Susanne Waldrep

Church Officers & Staff

Moderator: Ken Martin

Vice Moderator: John Wiechert

Treasurer: Art Nagasaki

Council Secretary: Janet Caporale

Clerk: Susanne Waldrep

Church Secretary: Sue Molczyk

Building & Grounds Team Leader: Art Nagasaki

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

German and Latin, 14th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1855; alt.

Descant

3 Good Chris - tian friends, re-joice with heart and soul and voice;

1 Good Chris-tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;
2 Good Chris-tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;
3 Good Chris-tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;

now you need not fear the grave: Je - sus Christ was born to save!

now give heed to what we say: Je - sus Christ is born to-day;
now you know of end - less bliss: Je - sus Christ was born for this!
now you need not fear the grave: Je - sus Christ was born to save!

Calls you one and calls you all to gain the ev - er -

Ox and ass be - fore him bow, a - sleep with - in the
God has o - pened heav - en's door, and you are blessed for -
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the ev - er -

last - ing hall. Christ was born, Christ was born to save!

man-ger now. Christ is born to - day, Christ is born to - day!
ev - er-more. Christ was born for this, Christ was born for this!
last-ing hall. Christ was born to save, Christ was born to save!

This carol is very old. Helwich Stern, a German mystic who died in 1386, related a vision in which angels, singing this carol, drew him into a dance. The words were originally monosyllabic, combining Latin phrases with the vernacular.

Tune: IN DULCI JUBILO 6.6.7.7.8.5.5.
German melody, 14th century.
Harm. adap. from John Sullivan, 1871
Descant, H. A. Chambers, 1931

Calendar at a Glance

Weekly Events

11:00 a.m. Sunday Worship & Fellowship

5:30 p.m. Community Meal every Tuesday

5:00 p.m. Wednesday Free Meals

7:00 p.m. Wednesday Choir practice

6:00 p.m. Thursday Night Prayer Meeting (Starting January 8)

Wednesday, December 24

7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service

Thursday, December 25

Christmas Day

Thursday, January 1

New Year's Day 2026

Thursday, January 8

6:00 p.m. Prayer Meeting

Birthdays and Anniversaries for the month of December:

Birthdays

December 1: Julianne Sutton

December 6: Joe Caporale

December 20: Holly Graves

December 25: Jesus Christ

Please be sure to visit Immanuel's website at www.icucc.org

REMINDER to bring in old socks & flexible plastic **Kroger** packaging for recycling. Call Peggy with questions.

Treasurer's Note:

Our offerings for **December 7 was \$1,881 and December 14 was \$**. We need to **collect \$1,675** each week to fund our approved budget. **Remember to honor your pledge commitments and tithes, especially when you miss any Sundays! Art Nagasaki, Treasurer**

Please join us for Sunday Service via Virtual Worship. Go to:

<https://www.facebook.com/oxfordimmanuelucc>

You do not have to join facebook, it will ask if you want to join. If not click no and it will still get you to the service.

Please continue to collect and donate your pop can tabs. There's a container in Fellowship Hall. Pop can tabs help support the Ronald McDonald Houses where parents can stay when their child is hospitalized. Tammy will be sending our donation later in May to the Ronald McDonald House in Ann Arbor.

Knitters, crocheters and crafters: If you need yarn for projects, we have a wide variety of colors and types in our craft room downstairs. Just let Tammy or Ken know.

STARTING JANUARY 8, 2026 THERE WILL BE A PRAYER MEETING EVERY THURSDAY AT IMMANUEL.

December 21, 2025

Matthew 1:18-25

God with Us

It was Christmas Eve, and I was joining my father at a church he had been attending. I settled into the pew, letting the medley of hymns soothe my still frazzled soul from the push to meet holiday deadlines at my Manhattan magazine job. Soon, though, I heard more than the music. I heard a silent prayer fill my heart.

God, thank You for being in my life. May I never forget to thank You even when dark times come. May I always know You are with me.

Why was I thinking about dark times descending upon my seemingly perfect life? I was young. My career was taking off. I had a wonderful apartment. I even had a special someone in my life.

Thankfully, the church school procession of angels with lopsided cardboard wings had begun, giving me something else to focus on. But throughout the service, every now and then, I kept thinking about, "May I never forget to thank You even when dark times come."

Two months later, "the one" I envisioned building a future with was killed in a jeep accident while traveling in Africa. The proverbial rug was ripped out from underneath me. Yet through my tears, I remembered my Christmas prayer. And so, I prayed in my sorrow a prayer of thanks for God being with me here in my dark time.

The year of unwanted change flew by and once again it was Christmas Eve. This time, though, I wasn't sitting in the pew of the church my father was attending. I was standing with a heavenly host of angels with lopsided cardboard wings. I had left my magazine job and was now serving the church as Christian ed director as I prepared to enter seminary. Little did I know then that down this unexpected path was a rural congregation waiting for me where I would find not only my call, but someone to share my life with.

As I waited with the overly excited angels, I thought about how drastically my life had changed. It was then the realization of where God had led me fully hit. I was standing in church named "Emmanuel," which was located on a street named "Hope."

The angels began fluttering as the organ bellowed with the first notes of the procession-al hymn. But I didn't hear any of it. All I could hear was a familiar prayer, in which I invite you to say along with me:

God, thank You for being in my life. May I never forget to thank You even when dark times come. May I always know You are with me. In the name of Emmanuel, God with us always, we pray. Amen.

(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's Sunday Bulletin.)



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