

# The United Church of Christ of Robesonia

301 West Penn Avenue, Robesonia, PA 19551

610-621-5770 -- [office@sprucc.org](mailto:office@sprucc.org) -- [www.sprucc.org](http://www.sprucc.org)

*No matter who you are,  
or where you are on life's journey,  
you're welcome here.*



## Jesus Presented in the Temple

*Welcome to our  
10:15am Worship Service  
In-Person & Streaming Online*



**Sunday, December 31, 2023**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas**  
**7<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas**

# Welcome

*May God's loving presence be very real to you,  
and may you receive strength and guidance today  
That will enable you to handle life's challenges.*



## **Children's Bulletins**

Crayons and activity bulletins are available in the narthex.  
The activities match today's Bible readings and are designed for 3-6 & 7-12 year olds.

## **Biblias en Español**

Biblias Bilingües en Español y Inglés están disponible en el vestíbulo narthex en la mesa de visitantes azul.  
(*Bilingual Bibles in Spanish & English are available in the narthex hallway on the blue visitors' table.*)

## **Nursery**

Persons of all ages (including children) are welcome to participate in the entire worship service. For an additional option, we have a supervised nursery for 0-8 year olds, located on the first floor. Please see Nursery Coordinators, Laurie Ostimchuk, Beth Miller & Geri Gammel if you are in need of the nursery.

## **Junior Worship**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month, following the mini message, the option of "Junior Worship" is offered downstairs for elementary age children to learn more about today's scripture lessons with fellow youth.

## **Restrooms**

Restrooms are located both on the first and second floors to the left of the elevator.

## **Changing Tables**

All four of our restrooms have changing tables. Each restroom has two "child care protection seats" to keep toddlers safe and secure while their parents use the restroom.

## **Water Fountains**

Water fountains are located on both the first and second floors to the left of the elevator.

## **Sunday School & Adult Faith Formation Classes**

Classes for all ages are held at 9:00am.

## **Sunday Worship**

Sunday Worship is held at 10:15am.

## **Youth Group**

Our Youth Group, for those in grades 5-12 (or ages 12-20 years old), meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and Last Thursday of the month from 6:00-7:00pm. Members and visitors alike are welcome.

## **Young Children & Family Ministries**

This ministry's focus is on children younger than youth group and their families, and most of the monthly activities are welcoming of children of all ages. Members and visitors alike are welcome.

## **Prayer and Care**

If you would like to add yourself or someone else to the prayer list, or request a pastoral call, please call or email the church office. You are welcome to take home with you a copy of *Our Daily Bread* daily devotional booklet, located on a table in the narthex hallway.

## **Looking for a Church to Call Home**

If you are looking for a new church family home, we would be happy for you to consider United Church of Christ of Robesonia. For more information about our church, we invite you to talk with our pastors, an usher, a greeter, or any member of our church.

## **More Information...**

Additional literature about our missions, ministries, and fellowship opportunities is located on the **Blue Visitor Table** in the narthex hallway, or contact us using the contact information on the front page of this bulletin.

Please let us know if we can be in prayer with you or if there is any way in which we can help make your worship experience more meaningful.

*{Symbols used in this bulletin: \*= if able please stand; ♪# = Red Hymnal Page; ♪# = Blue Hymnal Page}*

## **Virtual Worship Service**

Online: [Live Stream](https://www.sprucc.org) at [sprucc.org](https://www.sprucc.org) - Live or Watch & Listen Later on [Our YouTube Channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)  
[Facebook Live](https://www.facebook.com/www.sprucc.org/) at <https://www.facebook.com/www.sprucc.org/> - Live or Watch & Listen Later  
[Phone Stream](https://www.sprucc.org) at 1-888-649-5770 - Live or Listen Later

If you have any access problems, please let us know at 610-621-5770 or [Office@sprucc.org](mailto:Office@sprucc.org)



www.sprucc.org



Free WiFi

# ORDER FOR WORSHIP

## **We Gather**

*We are coming together as a community of faith to worship our God,  
and provide for one another our love, support, and care.*

### **A TIME OF GATHERING**

#### **RINGING OF THE BELL**

#### **WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*{If you have not already done so,  
please sign and pass the pew welcome pad  
to the person next to you.}*

#### **PRAYER BEFORE WORSHIP** ® *(Unison)*

**Faithful God, by whose Spirit all people and places become holy, lead us by that Spirit today. We have come to celebrate a birth that offers us rebirth. We have gathered that you might claim us as heirs, with Christ, of eternal life. Unite our hearts and minds in a chorus of praise, that the life of this church might be quickened, renewed, and refocused. May your faithful people become a crown of beauty in your hands. Amen.**

#### **PIANO PRELUDE**

*“What Child is this?”*

*arranged by Preston Keys*

*{Those who are able, please rise}*

#### **\*PROCESSIONAL HYMN**

*“O Come, All Ye Faithful” v1, 3, 5, 6*

**Vs1 O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.  
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;**

*Refrain*

**O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

**Vs3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;  
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;**

*Refrain*

**Vs5 Child, for us sinners poor and in the manger,  
we would embrace thee with love and awe.  
Who would not love thee, loving us so dearly?**

*Refrain*

**Vs6 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning,  
Jesus, to thee be all glory given.  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:**

*Refrain*

*Composed: John F. Wade, trans. by Frederick Oakeley;  
One License #A-728042*

**\*INVOCATION**

Leader: In the name of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of God the Holy Spirit.

All: **Amen**

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP** ®

Leader: Angels from the realms of glory,  
proclaimed the Messiah's birth

People: **Let all creation join in praising,  
with our voices evermore raising**

**\*SUNG CALL**                    *"Angels From the Realms of Glory"*

**Come and worship, come and worship,  
Worship Christ, the new born King.**

**We Repent**

*This is a time to confess our wrongdoings and neglects, ask for  
God's mercy, admit our need for God's forgiving grace,  
hear the assurance of our forgiveness,  
and then give God our thanks and praise.*

**\*CALL TO CONFESSION** ® (Leader)

From the boundless mercy of God we have received courage to address the Almighty, who judges but also redeems, who has created us to live fully in this present moment but has also planted eternity in our minds. Before this good and gracious God we pour out our confession. Let us confess our sins before God and before one another.

**\*CONFESSION OF SIN** ® (Unison)

**Gracious God, we bring our prayers to you sensing that there is more to life than the ways we have known. We are drawn to the Messiah, yet we sometimes shrink from following where faith leads. We are afraid of what we might lose if we are guided by the Spirit. Thoughts of sacrifice and servanthood are not instantly appealing to us. We are reluctant to enter into a close relationship with you. We think we know, better than you, what is best for us. Forgive our arrogance. Help us see the Christ. Amen.**

**\*SILENT PRAYERS OF CONFESSION**

*{A time to silently offer our personal prayers of confession}*

**\*SUNG PRAYER FOR MERCY**            *"God of Pity, God of Grace" vs. 1 & 5*                    *♪ Red #223*  
*Morris/Filitz; Public Domain*

**God of pity, God of grace, When we humbly seek Thy face,  
Bend from heaven, Thy dwelling place, Hear, forgive and save.**

**And what e'er our cry may be, When we lift our hearts to Thee,  
From our burden set us free: Heal, forgive, and save.**

**\*ASSURANCE OF PARDON** <sup>®</sup> (Leader)

Rejoice in God! Exalt God's holy name! You will be clothed with garments of salvation. The robes of righteousness are not heavy burdens, but offer a freedom you have not felt before. You will become a crown of beauty, a new creation, in the hands of a loving God.  
**Amen.**

*{please be seated}*

## **We Hear the Word of God**

*We seek to learn more about God's love and grace, and how we are to live our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Bible is our primary text on faith, which we consider to be scripture - sacred writings.  
We believe the Bible to be the "inspired word of God."  
Gospel (which means "Good News") refers to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which are Christians' most central books of the Bible.*

### **PROCLAMATION OF SCRIPTURE**

**Old Testament Lesson from the Torah attributed to Moses:** [Genesis 2:9, 16-17; 3:6, 14-24](#)  
**John's Prophetic Revelation in the New Testament:** [Revelation 22:1-21](#)

Leader: This is the word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**New Testament Gospel (Good News):** [Luke 2:22-40](#)

Leader: This is the gospel of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

### **HYMN**

*"Heaven's Christmas Tree"*

*Charles A. Tindley, 1851-1933*

### **CHRISTMAS LEGEND**

*"Why a Christmas Tree?"*

## We Respond with Thanks

*We have heard God's call and have come and worshiped,  
we have confessed our sins and been assured of our forgiveness, we have learned more  
about God's grace and God's will. We now respond by  
re-affirming our faith in God,  
praying with and for one another, trusting in God's providence in our world, and giving of  
ourselves for the sake of the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.*

*{Those who are able, please rise}*

**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (*Unison*)                      *The Apostle's Creed*

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried;  
he descended to the dead;  
on the third day he rose again,  
ascended into heaven,  
and is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.**

**He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,\*  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*\*The word "catholic" means "relating to the church universal" and was the word used in the original version of the Creed.  
It does not mean the Roman Catholic Church, but the church, the body of Christ, as a universal fellowship.*

*{Please be seated}*

### **CALL TO PRAYER**

**Leader:** The Lord be with you.

**People:** **And also with you.**

**Leader:** Let us pray.

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE <sup>®</sup>

Leader: Blessed by the light of Christ incarnate, let us pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

*{A time of silent prayer}*

Leader: In your mercy, God, guide the church. Through your Spirit, strengthen the body of Christ with a listening and probing faith. Lord, in your mercy,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: In your abundance, Creator, sustain the earth. Bless all your creatures: from the ones that swim and creep to the ones that run and soar. Lord, in your mercy,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: In your wisdom, Teacher, equip us to be peacemakers. We pray for an end to conflict in the land of Jesus' birth, and in every land. Lord, in your mercy,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: In your compassion, Father, heal wounds and care for needs. We offer our prayers for all who need your healing. Lord, in your mercy,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: In your love, Mother, hear this congregation's prayers. May your presence be felt in this community in the midst of both joys and sorrows. Lord, in your mercy,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: In your grace, Lord, be our hope in the face of death. We lift up the lives of all the saints. In this season of family gatherings, comfort those who gather to grieve and be near to those oppressed by loneliness and isolation. Lord, in your mercy,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh in whose name we pray....

## LORD'S PRAYER *(Unison)*

**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 debts as we forgive our debtors,**

**and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory forever.**

**Amen.**

**SUNG PRAYER RESPONSE**      *"I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day"*      vs 3 & 4

**Vs3**    **And in despair I bowed my head:  
"There is no peace on earth," I said,  
"For hate is strong and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men."**

**Vs4**    **Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good will to men."**

*Text: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1807–1882  
Music: John Baptiste Calkin, 1827–1905  
One License #A-728042*

**CALL TO PRAISE**

**Leader:** We have heard angels from on high sweetly singing over the plains

**People:** **We join the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains**

**SUNG PRAISE**      *"Angels We Have Heard on High"*

*Music by Edward Shippen Barnes  
One License #A-728042*

**Glo - - - - ria, in excelsis Deo!  
Glo - - - - ria, in excelsis Deo!**

*{Ushers, please assemble at rear of Sanctuary}*

**OFFERTORY INVITATION**

**Leader:** What seeds are we sowing for the sake of a more righteous and just world? Who will witness to God's intention that we live together as heirs to a rich, full life?

**People:** **It is our duty and our privilege to give our best that Christ may be revealed to all.**

**RETURNING GOD'S TITHES AND PRESENTING OUR OFFERINGS**

[Online Giving](#)

*{Today, we will be passing the offering plate in person. You may also offer your tithe and offering to God through our secure [Online Giving](#) option on our website at [sprucc.org](#) (Click Here), or you may mail your offering to United Church of Christ of Robesonia; 301 West Penn Ave; Robesonia, PA 19551}.*

**PIANO OFFERTORY**      *"Go Tell it On the Mountain"*

*arranged by John Carter*

*{Those who are able, please rise}*

**\*OFFERTORY RESPONSE**      *"What Child is This"*

*Words: William C Dix  
One License #A-728042*

**So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh,  
Come peasant, king to own Him;  
The King of kings salvation brings;  
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.  
This, this is Christ the King;  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary!**



**\*OFFERTORY PRAYER** <sup>②</sup>(Leader)

Our God, with joyous praise, we return to you a portion of all you have given to us. May our giving exceed the demands of the law. You have invited us to sacrifices befitting our blessings. You have asked us to care for those less privileged. What we offer in these moments is a beginning. We will ponder again your amazing grace in granting us life, in offering the child Jesus to bring us back to you, and in giving us life everlasting. Praise be to you, O God. **Amen.**

**We Are Sent Out**

*In response to God's love and grace,  
we go out into the world to share God's Good News  
through our words and actions.*

**\*COMMISSION** <sup>②</sup>

Leader: Go in peace, carrying God's word to the world.  
Praise God, and tell the good news of a Savior.

**People: Our eyes have seen an amazing gift.  
Our lives will witness to our salvation.**

Leader: Let praise fill all your waking hours.  
Welcome the Spirit's leading and guidance.

**People: We are heirs of amazing blessings.  
We are gifted to become a blessing to others.**

**ALL: Amen.**

**\*BENEDICTION**

**\*THREE FOLD SUNG AMEN**

♪ *Red #558*  
*Public Domain*

**\*SENDING HYMN**

*"O Tannenbaum (O Christmas Tree)"*

*German Folk Song*

*{Acolyte carries the light back into the world, leading us,  
as we now go to carry God's light and love back into the world.}*

**POSTLUDE**

*Join Us For Fellowship and Food in Miller Fellowship Hall*

**Free WiFi:** StPaulsUCC-Guest & StPaulsUCC-5G-Guest  
**Password (for both):** iamheretoserve



## The Flow of the Worship Service

Our worship service has an intentional order to it. The flow of worship is called the liturgical movement. The movement reminds us weekly of our journey in faith of moving from being separated from God by sin, to being restored by God's grace as disciples of Christ. It is based on the sixth chapter of the Biblical book of Isaiah.

- (1) God welcomes us and invites us
- (2) We respond to God's call by worshipping Him
- (3) We confess our need for God's forgiveness and grace
- (4) We are assured of God's forgiveness and grace
- (5) We learn more about God's will through scripture, song, and sermon
- (6) We grow closer to God and one another through prayer
- (7) We give God thanks by offering our time, talent, and treasure
- (8) God sends us into the world to share His love and grace with others



## Worship Service Resource Credits

Biblical quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible (1989) by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

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  - ① United Church of Christ Neighbors in Need (NIN) 2023 Resources.
  - ② *Led By Love* by Lavon Baylor. (1996). United Church Press; Cleveland, OH.
  - ② *Occasional Services; A Companion to the Lutheran Book of Worship*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress. (1982).
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  - ⑦ Edmonds, Robert Lee (Editor). (2008). *In Our Own Way; Living a Scouting Life Through Faith; A Handbook of Prayer and Devotion*. Dallas, TX: Red Honor Press
  - ⑧ Reprinted with Permission from *Lecturn Resource*. 2014. Logos Productions, Inc., Inver Grove Heights, MN.
  - ⑨ Miller, Earl D. (1994). *Consecrating Stewards*. Ohio Conference, United Church of Christ.
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## Staff & Leadership

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*Financial Secretary & Assistant Secretary:* Geneva Aulenbach

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*Consistory Vice President:* George McLain

*Consistory Secretary:* Geri Gammel

**About the Author of "Heaven's Christmas Tree"**  
**Charles Albert Tindley (1851-1933)**  
**Grandfather of Gospel Music**

Charles Albert Tindley (1851-1933), the son of slave parents, taught himself to read while a janitor at Philadelphia's Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church. He took night classes and correspondence courses and was ordained a Methodist minister. In 1902 he was appointed the pastor of Calvary Methodist Church, where he served with great success and distinction. The church was rebuilt and -- despite Tindley's protest -- was named Tindley Temple Methodist Church. The church grew to become a congregation of more than 7,000 African Americans, Europeans, Jews, and Hispanics.

Tindley has five hymns in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989): "Nothing Between My Soul and My Savior" (Nothing Between); "When the Storms of Life Are Raging" (Stand by me), "If the World from You Withhold" (Leave it There); "Beams of Heaven As I Go" (Someday), "We Are Tossed and Driven" (By and By). "Heaven's Christmas Tree" is not one of his five in the Methodist hymnal. The Civil Rights anthem, "We Shall Overcome," was based on his song, "I'll Overcome Someday," which is also not in the Methodist hymnal.

It is Thomas A. Dorsey (1899-1993), composer of "Precious Lord" and "There Will Be Peace in the Valley," who is known as the "Father of Gospel Music." But if that is true, then Charles Albert Tindley is the "Grandfather of Gospel Music," for it was Tindley who virtually invented the style a generation before Dorsey began composing, and it was Dorsey's hearing Tindley's hymns at an annual meeting of the National Baptist Convention in Philadelphia that led Dorsey to begin writing religious music. Dorsey had previously been a successful jazz and blues musician who often made use of bawdy and brash lyrics. While Dorsey went on to successfully blend the sacred spirituals and hymns with the secular style of blues and jazz, he always acknowledged his debt to Tindley.

Tindley was born on July 7, 1851, Berlin, Maryland, fourteen years before the end of the American Civil War, the son of slave parents. By age five, both of his parents had died. By age seventeen he had taught himself how to read. He moved to Philadelphia and found employment as the janitor for the Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church. He took night classes and later correspondence courses from Boston University, eventually being ordained in the Methodist ministry, serving appointments in South Wilmington, Odessa, Ezion, Wilmington, Delaware, and May, New Jersey. From 1899-1902 he served as presiding elder of the Wilmington district.

In 1902 Tindley was appointed pastor of the Calvary Methodist Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the church that had employed him thirty years earlier as its janitor. This was to be his position until his death on July 26, 1933.

Tindley composed forty-seven hymns. Tindley's hymns formed the basis of the black gospel hymn style for all who came after. They were based on the spiritual and the blues and included elements from white gospel style. Tindley wrote his hymns within the older tradition of African American worship and music that included distinctive preaching and singing styles, lining-out, shouting, hand-clapping, improvised melodies, rhythmic keyboard accompaniments, and congregational interjections of hallelujahs and amens. The congregation would often sing along with the choir or soloist. Later in the twentieth century the style included the addition of the electronic organ, especially the early Hammond organs, and percussion instruments. Tindley's lyrics are a reflection of the daily lives of African Americans of the time, and speak of poverty, discrimination, suffering, with deliverance, freedom, and a better day coming.

This hymn is integrally connected with Tindley's most famous sermon, "Heaven's Christmas Tree," a sermon demanded each year. The sermon was based on Revelation 22:2, "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river was the tree of life" (KJV). The delivery of this sermon each year was so popular that Olympia Boxing Hall, a special auditorium, had to be rented to accommodate a crowd of 5,000. This arena was stretched beyond capacity, and some were turned away. Following the sermon, unchurched attenders were invited to the altar for prayer. After a second presentation of the sermon the following year, Tindley felt that something was missing. He was questioned about this, and responded, "I need a proper hymn for this sermon. Next year I'll have one" (Kimbrough and Young, 2006, p. xi). The following year, 1915, he prepared this hymn.

Stanzas 2, 3, 4, and 5 unpack a specific "package" on different limbs of the tree. Stanza 2 holds a package of "salvation" on one limb of the tree. Stanza 3 has a limb that holds the package of "love . . . marked by a deep crimson stain." Another package labeled "I will help you" is the subject of stanza 4. This is a package of "faith" that is experienced by "holding his hand." In stanza 5, Tindley mentions, that while there are many other gifts, the package he chooses is one that contains "happy home" -- a place "with God near the throne, / a place where the weary shall be free."

*The above are excerpts from: [umcdiscipleship.org/resources/heavens-christmas-tree](http://umcdiscipleship.org/resources/heavens-christmas-tree),  
[umcdiscipleship.org/articles/history-of-hymns-i-have-heard-of-a-tree-heavens-christmas-tree](http://umcdiscipleship.org/articles/history-of-hymns-i-have-heard-of-a-tree-heavens-christmas-tree), &  
[umcdiscipleship.org/resources/charles-albert-tindley-1851-1933-grandfather-of-gospel-music](http://umcdiscipleship.org/resources/charles-albert-tindley-1851-1933-grandfather-of-gospel-music)*

## About Today

**Church Season - Christmas** - Christmas is the season of celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, God's anointed one, who is our King and Saviour, who is the Light of the World. The season of Christmas last 12 days and is from sunset of December 24 through January 5. (January 6 is Epiphany).

**Color of the Paraments** (cloths on the altar, pulpit, and lectern):

**White** - symbolizes Christ as the Light of the World. of Christ's presence for the Kingdom of God is near.

**Colors of the Advent Season** (such as used for the Advent Candles):

**Blue** - symbolizes the hope found in the anticipated coming of Christ

**Violet** - symbolizes royalty and penitent preparation for Christ our King, who offers forgiveness

**Rose/Pink** - symbolizes joy, as expressed by Jesus' mother Mary

The suggested scripture lessons are from the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), which selects passages throughout the Bible over a three year cycle. The RCL is the most common lectionary used by Christian churches. We are in **Year B**, which emphasizes the Gospel of Mark.

The Bible is in two sections: Old Testament - OT (scripture prior to Christ's birth), located in the first 2/3 of the Bible; and New Testament - NT (about Christ & early church).

**This Sunday, December 31, 2023, Lectionary Reading for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas**

Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

### **Isaiah**

The book of Isaiah (OT) is attributed to three prophets. The first of whom is from where the book gets its name, and is about Isaiah's call to become a prophet and his prophecy that Jerusalem will face God's judgement regarding its immorality in order to be God's Holy City (chaps. 1-39, written 738-688 B.C.), the second is about living in exile in Babylon (chaps. 40-55, written 597-539 B.C.), and the third is about the return from exile to Judah and the rebuilding of the Temple (chaps. 56-66, written 520-515 B.C.). A prophet is one who is divinely appointed by God to lead and instruct.

### **Psalm 148**

This OT hymn, written sometime after 538 B.C. calls upon all of creation to give praise to God.

### **The Letter of Paul to the Galatians**

This NT Epistle (letter) was written to the churches of Galatia by the apostle Paul sometime between 49-55 A.D. Within this letter is the critical theological doctrine of justification by faith (salvation by God's actions through Jesus Christ, not by our own actions). Paul was a Christian, Jew, Pharisee, Roman citizen, and church leader, who had a direct encounter with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus after Jesus' ascension into heaven. Paul wrote more of the NT than any other person.

### **The Gospel According to Luke**

The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles is attributed to Luke "the beloved physician," written around 59-90 A.D. (C.E.). Not having met Jesus personally, Luke undertook the task of "investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account" of Jesus Christ, "so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed."

**Next Sunday, January 7, 2024, Lectionary Reading for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Epiphany**

Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11

# 205 HEAVEN'S CHRISTMAS TREE

...they are now justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...  
Romans 3:24-25

1. I have heard of a tree, a great Christ-mas tree, It was  
 2. There is one I be-hold in let-ters of gold, It  
 3. There is one just a-bove, it's ti-tle is love, It is  
 4. An-oth-er I see, it must be for me, The  
 5. There are man-y, I'm sure, but just this one more I

stall.  
me.  
stain.  
read.  
rest.

fixed in yon Beth-le-hem's, Beth-le-hem's stall. The  
 hangs on a limb near to, limb near to me. 'Tis  
 marked by a deep crim-son, deep crim-son stain. For  
 words "I will help you" I, help you I read. While  
 speak of a-bove all the, bove all the rest. It

bles-sings of heav-en for you and for me, A  
 la-beled "sal-va-tion," and Je-sus, I'm told, Has  
 there it was tied by the Lord when He died, And  
 hold-ing His hand, by faith I can stand, And  
 spells "hap-py home" with God near the throne, A

Christ - mas pres - ent for all.  
 bought that pack - age for me.  
 glo - ry to His dear name.  
 this is the pack - age I need.  
 place where the wea - ry shall rest.

There is a pack-age for me on that tree; A pre - cious

to - ken that some-one loves me. Oh yes, I can see on

Cal - va - ry's Tree, That there is a pack-age for me.

Text: Charles A. Tindley, 1851-1933

Tune: HEAVEN'S CHRISTMAS TREE, 11 9 11 7 with refrain, Charles A. Tindley, 1851-1933; arr. by Charles A. Tindley, Jr.

# O Christmas Tree (O Tannenbaum)

1 O Christ-mas tree, O Christ-mas tree, how love - ly are your  
*O Tan - nen - baum, O Tan - nen - baum, wie treu sind dei - ne*  
 2 O Christ-mas tree, O Christ-mas tree, how won - der - ful your

bran - ches! The sight of you at Christ-mas - tide spreads  
*Blät - ter! Du grünst nicht nur zur Som - mer - zeit, nein,*  
 mes - sage! Your lights pro - claim the Sav - ior's birth; good

hope and glad - ness far and wide. O Christ - mas tree, O  
*auch im Win - ter, wenn es schneit. O Tan - nen - baum, O*  
 will to all and peace on earth. O Christ - mas tree, O

Christ - mas tree, how love - ly are your bran - ches!  
*Tan - nen - baum, wie treu sind dei - ne Blät - ter!*  
 Christ - mas tree, how won - der - ful your mes - sage!

German Folk Song