

Worship transcript for December 24, 2020, 10 pm

*Preludes*

“Same Old Lang Syne” (Dan Fogelberg)

Gordon Kent- piano and vocals

Met my old lover in the grocery store  
The snow was falling Christmas Eve  
I stole behind her in the frozen foods  
And I touched her on the sleeve  
She didn't recognize the face at first  
But then her eyes flew open wide  
She went to hug me and she spilled her purse  
And we laughed until we cried  
We took her groceries to the checkout stand  
The food was totaled up and bagged  
We stood there lost in our embarrassment  
As the conversation dragged  
Went to have ourselves a drink or two  
But couldn't find an open bar  
We bought a six-pack at the liquor store  
And we drank it in her car  
We drank a toast to innocence  
We drank a toast to now  
And tried to reach beyond the emptiness  
But neither one knew how  
She said she'd married her an architect  
Who kept her warm and safe and dry  
She would have liked to say she loved the man  
But she didn't like to lie  
I said the years had been a friend to her  
And that her eyes were still as blue  
But in those eyes I wasn't sure if I  
Saw doubt or gratitude  
She said she saw me in the record stores  
And that I must be doing well  
I said the audience was heavenly  
But the traveling was hell  
We drank a toast to innocence  
We drank a toast to now  
And tried to reach beyond the emptiness  
But neither one knew how  
We drank a toast to innocence  
We drank a toast to time  
Reliving in our eloquence  
Another 'auld lang syne'

The beer was empty and our tongues were tired  
And running out of things to say  
She gave a kiss to me as I got out  
And I watched her drive away  
Just for a moment I was back at school  
And felt that old familiar pain  
And as I turned to make my way back home  
The snow turned into rain

“Carol of the Stranger” (Abbie Betinis; text by Michael Dennis Browne)  
Alex Bodenham, Jen Hayman, William Kenlon, Amelia Peele, and Rochelle Rice

Peace and grace be to this house  
Where all are welcomed in  
Receive the guest, receive this heart  
Tell the stranger, tell!

Tell the stranger what you cannot tell those who love you  
And desire your joy  
Tell!

Make tall your walls, make long these beams  
Who once believed alone  
Make wide the circle, feed the fire  
Tell the silence, tell!

Tell the silence what you cannot tell those who love you  
And desire your joy  
Tell!

Blessings be upon this place  
Let every wound be healed  
Let every secret, every dream:  
Tell the angel, tell!

Tell the angel what you cannot tell those who love you  
And desire your joy  
Tell!

Peace and grace be to this house  
All will be returned!  
Let every soul be called your own  
Tell the mystery, tell!

Tell the mystery what you long to tell those who love you  
And desire your joy  
Tell!

“Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas” (Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane)  
Amelia Peele, soprano; Gordon Kent, piano

Have yourself a merry little Christmas  
Let your heart be light  
From now on  
Our troubles will be out of sight  
Have yourself a merry little Christmas

Make the Yule-tide gay  
From now on  
Our troubles will be miles away  
Here we are as in olden days  
Happy golden days of yore  
Faithful friends who are dear to us  
Gather near to us once more

Through the years we all will be together  
If the fates allow  
Hang a shining star upon the highest bough  
And have yourself a merry little Christmas now

“Greensleeves” (arr. by John B. Escosa)  
Monika Vasey Rhodes, harp

“Labour’s Reward” (world premiere; William Kenlon; text source unknown)  
William Kenlon, vocals; Jen Hayman, piano

The short cold days and long cold nights  
The people to the fire invites.

Now happy they who furnished are,  
and did in summer time prepare

For victuals, drinks, and good hot fires  
All which this season now requires

If geese and sheep with care were fed—  
if, at the proper time of year,  
You from the sheep the wool did shear—

And, if you afterwards begun,  
To have it carded, have it spun,

And wove, and put upon your back,  
You'll be warm dressed when others lack.

If you October beer did brew,  
you have the credit of it now,  
And pleasure of the drinking too.

Provide good cheer, yourselves enjoy,  
And all your needless cares destroy.

With harmless mirth, and best of cheer,  
Good wine, or ale, or humming beer,  
And merry Christmas crown the year.

*Call to Worship/Chalice Lighting (Rev. Louise Green)*

Welcome to Christmas Eve with All Souls Unitarian DC! I am Rev. Louise Green, Minister of Congregational Care. We are so glad you are here from so many places, whether as long-time congregants, newer arrivals, or our very special guests.

Let us fully breathe into this moment, and set aside holiday flurry and bustle, so that we may be present together. At each Unitarian Universalist service, we light our chalice, symbol of the Light within us, and the sacred container around us. I invite you to light a candle also, and to imagine us all connected by Light, from hundreds of locations.

Algernon Blackwood said, Ritual is the passageway of the soul into the Infinite. Our Christmas ritual passageway takes us into an ancient tale of hope, hardship, and wonder. This year, we kindle Christmas chalices both expectant and weary, in grief and in joy. We await the beauty of story and song, anticipating a complicated and mysterious telling, one which has been retold for centuries. Tonight, we are beautiful living members of the great family of All Souls. \* Now we invite you to take a moment for what we call Zoom beholding. Switch to gallery view from speaker view, so you can see the many beautiful faces present. We will take a few minutes to wave and greet one another, while still on mute, please.

*Welcome (Rev. Kathleen Rolenz)*

(words adapted from a post by Rev. Kendyl Gibbons)

Welcome to the All Souls Christmas Eve 2020 on line gathering.

I know many of you are remember Christmas Eve of years past  
of entering the sanctuary and hearing the organ belt out "O Come All Ye Faithful,  
and may be longing for the sights and sounds of a more familiar and comforting time.

This year, we must make Christmas out of the materials at hand,  
so I encourage you to get your bells to ring during O Come All Ye Faithful – when we “Sing  
Choirs of Angels!” Ring your bells to welcome the angels of this night!

Although we gather in our separate places, we are not alone.  
We are, in fact, gathered here to defy the isolation and the darkness  
That gnaws at us all the time, corona virus or no;  
We are here to bear witness that community endures  
Even when the Grinch has hijacked all the presents,  
Because we are here for each other.  
Because of the memories of Christmas Eves past,  
And the promise of Christmas Eves that shall be in years to come,  
This one is different, and special, but it does not stand alone,  
Just as we do not stand alone.  
It is part of a sequence of the cycling years, and we remember and we create anew

The heart-lifting illumination of Christmas Eve.  
We find ways to make music, and ways to make meaning,  
and ways to make merry, and ways to make magic, together while apart,  
so that we might not needlessly risk each others’ lives,  
and add more burdens to our overwhelmed health care systems.

Christmas Eve has always been about the birth of love that overcomes loneliness and oppression  
both;  
About the light of hope in the midnight of despair;  
About ancient promises that finally, unexpectedly come true,  
And a song of peace in a world of violence and strife.

This, my friends, is no time to give up on those proclamations.  
Christmas Eve, as always, is an invitation to double down on a strange and wonderful vision  
That we all seem to have tucked away somewhere in our practical, work-a-day hearts;  
That this life that we live, in this world that we share,  
Could suddenly bloom into peace on earth, and good will to all people – now, on this very night.

Or, if not that, at least the heavens might blaze with stars and ring with angelic song,  
And we might all remember that somewhere a child is being born,  
Which means that this is, without doubt, a holy night.

Come, my dears, let us kindle our lights, and pass them heart to heart if not hand to hand.  
Let us lift our voices in the familiar songs of rejoicing – for the coming of a prince of peace, who  
shall save the lost and bring light to the nations.  
Even now, the flame brightens, and the song rises. Hark and join together in this ancient carol: O  
Come, All Ye Faithful!

*Carol*

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

*Prophecy (Rev. Rolenz)*

Our first lesson is from the book of Isaiah, Chapter 11 verses 1 – 11.

Lesson Isaiah 1 – 11 (excerpts) Rev. Kathleen Rolenz

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

The Spirit of the Living God will rest on him—

the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,

the Spirit of counsel and of might,

the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the living God...

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he hears with his ears;  
but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of  
the earth.

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
the calf and the lion and the yearling[[a](#)] together; and a little child will lead them.

The infant will play near the cobra’s den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper’s  
nest.

They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the  
knowledge of the Living God as the waters cover the sea.

*Anthem (All Souls Choir; Kym Lewis and Rose Lindgren, duet)*

“Lully, Lulla, Lullay” (Philip Stopford)

Lully, lullay, Thou little tiny Child,

Bye, bye, lully, lullay.

Lullay, thou little tiny Child,

Bye, bye, lully, lullay.

O sisters too, how may we do,

For to preserve this day

This poor youngling for whom we do sing

Bye, bye, lully, lullay.

Herod, the king, in his raging,

Charged he hath this day

His men of might, in his owne sight,

All young children to slay.

That woe is me, poor Child for Thee!  
And ever mourn and sigh,  
For thy parting neither say nor sing,  
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.

*Annunciation (Delabian Rice-Thurston)*

Our second lesson is from the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 1, verses 26 through 38:

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a maiden engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the House of David. The maiden's name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have known no man?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God...Nothing is impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of God; let it be with me according to your word."

Then the angel departed from her.

*Anthem (Jen Hayman, Amelia Peele, Rochelle Rice)*

"There is No Rose" (Benjamin Britten; from "Ceremony of Carols")

There is no rose of such virtue  
As is the rose that bare Jesu; Alleluia.

For in this rose contained was  
Heaven and earth in little space; Res miranda.

By that rose we may well see  
That He is God in persons three, Pares forma.

The angels sungen the shepherds too:  
Gloria in excelsis Deo: Gaudeamus.

Now leave we all this worldly mirth  
And follow we this joyful birth; Transeamus.

*Birth (Jamari O'Neal)*

Our third lesson is from the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 2, verses 1 through 7

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

*Anthem (Jen Hayman, Amelia Peele, Rochelle Rice, William Kenlon, Alex Bodenham)*

“Hush, My Dear” (Gabriel Jackson; text by Isaac Watts)

Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber, holy angels guard thy bed,  
heavenly blessings without number, gently falling on thy head.

Soft and easy is thy cradle, coarse and hard thy Savior lay:  
when his birthplace was a stable, and his softest bed was hay.

See the kindly shepherds ‘round him Telling wonders from the sky  
Where they sought him, there they found him With his virgin mother by.

May’st thou learn to know and fear him, love and serve him all thy days;  
then to dwell forever near him, tell his love and sing his praise.

*Shepherds & Angels (Rev. Green)*

Our fourth lesson is from the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 2, verses 8 through 20.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, 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 Savior who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”



And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth, peace among those whom he favors!”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

So they 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 at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

#### *Carol*

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o’er the plains

And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.

Gloria in excelsis Deo

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?

Say what may the tidings be, which inspire your heavenly song? (Gloria)

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing

Come adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King. (Gloria)

#### *Reading (Delabian Rice-Thurston)*

“Touched by an Angel” (Maya Angelou)

We, unaccustomed to courage –exiles from delight live coiled in shells of loneliness until love leaves its high holy temple and comes into our sight to liberate us into life.

Love arrives and in its train come ecstasies;

old memories of pleasure –ancient histories of pain.

Yet if we are bold, love strikes away the chains of fear from our souls.

We are weaned from our timidity; In the flush of love’s light we dare be brave

And suddenly we see that love costs all we are and will ever be. Yet it is only love which sets us free.

*Offertory (Rev. Green)*

Our entire offering for Christmas Eve will go to our community partner: La Clinica del Pueblo, in English... The People's Clinic. La Clinica has worked for over 35 years with the regional Latino/Latina community. (Rose/Gary: [www.lcdp.org](http://www.lcdp.org) for chat.) Funds will be collected by All Souls tonight, and then presented as one check in the New Year. Your dollars would fund medical services, mental health and addiction support, community health action, language access, and strategies for change.

Our alliance goes back for decades, including hosting the annual Posada, a large event in Spanish with pageant, gifts, music and Santa. I first experienced the beautiful mayhem of La Posada in 2004, with over 300 children and their families celebrating exuberantly in our Sanctuary. A very different Posada happened online this week, of course. This painful year of health crisis, anti-immigrant backlash, and economic insecurity has been tough for our Latinx neighbors.

This hardship is landing on real people with poignant stories. We dedicate this offering to the family and friends of Moisés Santos, a 44-yr-old immigrant from El Salvador. Moisés died on our own All Souls front steps last Friday, as he sought shelter in the cold. He was experiencing new addiction struggles, and 2020 job and home loss as a direct result of the pandemic. His father and extended family is in El Salvador. His sister works at La Clinica; another sister and the 20-yr-old daughter of Moisés live a block up 16th St.

We grieve this hard loss and so many more. There are thousands more struggling in similar ways tonight in DC, so your offering will make a difference. Please ponder how you might give very generously to the vital and life-saving work of La Clinica del Pueblo. Thank you for your gifts to our neighbors.

*Anthem (Rochelle Rice, Amelia Peele, vocals; Pablo Benavente, guitar)*

“Nino Lindo” (traditional Mexican; arr. Diana Saez)

Niño lindo, ante ti me rindo.  
Niño lindo, eres tú mi Dios. (x3)

Esa tu hermosura, Ese tu candor,  
el alma me roba, el alma me roba,  
me roba el amor.

Nino Lindo...

La vida, bien mío, y el alma también,  
te ofrezco, gustoso, te ofrezco, gustoso,  
rendido a tus pies.

Nino Lindo...

Adiós, tierno Infante, adiós, Niño, adiós  
adiós, dulce amante,  
adiós, dulce amante, adiós, Niño, adiós.

*Magi (Rev. Rolenz)*

Our fifth lesson is from a 2nd century book called “The Gospel of James.” This is a book which includes stories about Jesus’ birth and childhood. It was excluded from the collection of Bible books we have today.

When Joseph was ready to go into Judea ,there was a great commotion in Bethlehem for the Magi came, saying: Where is he that is born king of the Jews—for we have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him.

When Herod heard, he was much disturbed, and sent officers to the Magi. And he sent for the priests, and examined them, saying: How is it written about the Christ? Where is He to be born? And they said: In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written. And he sent them away.

He examined the Magi, saying to them: What sign have you seen in reference to the king that has been born? The Magi said: We have seen a star of great size shining among these stars, and obscuring their light, so that the stars did not appear; and we thus knew that a king has been born to Israel, and we have come to worship him.

Herod said: Go and seek him; and if you find him, let me know, in order that I also may go and worship him. And the Magi went out.

And, behold, the star which they had seen in the east went before them until they came to the cave, and it stood over the top of the cave. The Magi saw the infant with His mother Mary; and they brought forth from their bag gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, and having been warned by the angel not to go into Judæa, they went into their own country by another road.

*Anthem (Steven Combs, baritone; Monika Vasey Rhodes, harp)*

“O Holy Night”

*Prayer (Rev. Kathleen Rolenz)*

Now is the time to dim the lights if you haven’t already, and have your candle and matches or lighter ready – as we prepare our hearts to make room for this Silent Night.

Oh Spirit of Life which kindles our hope in times of lessing light  
be with us now this evening.

This is a time when we make meaning from ordinary things;  
a star, a barn, a birth  
all contribute to the magic of this moment.

We may scoff at Christmas, may be jaded by the way the message has become wrapped in

messages beyond their original meaning,  
but we lean in towards this candle light as we lean close to a warming fire.  
Tonight is both a time to reflect on both the miracle of birth  
and on the world's failings  
for the Christmas story is really one of failure;  
failure of a couple's native land to protect them;  
failure of hospitality to provide a space for a woman feeling the birth pangs coming;  
failure of a country's inability to provide health care for a pregnant, immigrant family.  
We are reminded too – of other failure of an evil King's wish to destroy the Prince of Peace;  
the failure to destroy Jesus' memory and legacy  
the failure of hate and division over the power of compassion and love.  
Tonight is a time to reflect on the ways in which we – those of us holding candles tonight –  
despite many conditions that may have thwarted us – have been brought here, now.  
For now – we are safe and warm.  
For now – we are joined by hundreds of others whose candles serve to remind us of the  
collective power of shared light

For now – we are holding the hope of recovery from devastation  
resuming not normal life – but creating a new normal  
which is what Jesus of Nazareth's life was about  
challenging that which was taken for granted as normal  
insisting that all persons, regardless of rank or station in life  
were worthy of our respect.

So let the candles we light this evening represent that re-set  
that new beginning – a recommitment to the message that this baby grew up to preach and teach  
and embody with his life:  
a message of such radical hospitality and love – one that we still seek to live out today. Sing with  
me now this ancient carol as we light candles together.

### *Carol*

#### “Silent Night”

Silent night, holy night,  
All is calm, all is bright  
Round yon virgin mother and child.  
Holy infant so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace.  
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night,  
Shepherds quake at the sight,  
Glories stream from heaven afar,  
Heavenly hosts sing alleluia;

Christ the Savior, is born!  
Christ the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night,  
Son of God, love's pure light  
Radiant beams from thy holy face,  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

*Benediction (Rev. Rolenz)*

“The Work of Christmas” (Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman)

When the song of angels is stilled,  
when the star in the sky is gone,  
when the kings and princes are home,  
when the shepherds are back with their flock—  
the work of Christmas begins;  
to find the lost, to heal the broken,  
to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner,  
to rebuild the nations,  
to bring peace among the brothers and sisters,  
to make music in the heart.  
Amen, go in peace, and Merry Christmas

*Benediction in Music (All Souls Choir; Monika Vasey Rhodes, harp)*

“Still, Still, Still” (traditional; arr. by Norman Luboff)

Still, Still, Still  
One can hear the falling snow  
For all is hushed, the world is sleeping  
Holy star, it's vigil keeping  
Still, Still, Still  
One can hear the falling snow

Sleep, sleep, sleep  
Tis the eve of the savior's birth  
The night is peaceful all around you  
Close your eyes, let sleep surround you  
Sleep, sleep, sleep  
Tis the eve of the savior's birth

Dream, dream, dream  
Of the joyous day to come

While guardian angels without number  
Watch you as you sweetly slumber  
Dream, dream, dream  
Of the joyous day to come