

# THE LIGHT

*of the world*

**December 24, 2020  
Christmas Eve Service**



**FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
129 MILLER AVENUE  
PORTSMOUTH, NH 03801  
603.436.6038  
[fumcportsmouth.com](http://fumcportsmouth.com)

**REV. DR. DEBRA J. HANSON**

**Welcome**

**Invitation**

**Concert of Carols**

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

**Reading the Word:** Luke 2:1-12

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

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 .

**Ministry of Music**

**Monologues:** Joseph and Mary

# From “The Christmas Story in First Person: Three Monologues for Worship” © 2011 By Matthew L. Kelley

## **Mary**

It all started that night when the angel showed up. He was telling me how much God loved me and how I was going to be blessed. Then he said that I would become pregnant before Joseph and I got married. To be honest, I’m still not sure how being an unwed teenage mother in a small town where gossip spreads like wildfire is a blessing from God.

When people found out, it was horrible. My father wouldn’t even look me in the eye for weeks. When I would walk down the street, I would hear the whispers. “Look at that little tramp. She comes from such a great family, too, and this is how she repays them. And poor Joseph—such a good man. He doesn’t deserve something like this. God will judge her.”

I was sure my life was over when Joseph came to see me. I thought he was going to tell me that our engagement was off, but instead he said the angel had visited him, too, and that he knew God was doing something great. I could tell from his voice that he wasn’t sure he believed what he was saying, but then again, I wasn’t sure I believed it either.

When my belly was so big, I thought I would burst at any moment, Joseph told me we would have to travel to a faraway town for the census. As we made the journey, I began to feel the pains. At first, I wasn’t sure if it was contractions or just that the donkey wasn’t very steady on its feet. But sure enough, when we got to Bethlehem my water broke. None of the houses had any room for us, even though I was clearly in labor. One man said he’d do us a favor by letting us stay in his stable. Some favor. I didn’t want my baby to be born in a cold, wet cave surrounded by filthy animals. Still, it was better than nothing.

After he was born, I was holding him, trying to rock him to sleep and I started crying. There I was in a town where we knew no one, with a baby people at home knew wasn't Joseph's. "I'm so young," I thought. "I can barely take care of myself. How can I take care of a baby?" Just when I thought God had abandoned me, I looked down at my son. He was staring up into my eyes with a calm that I'd never seen in anyone before. It was as if this little infant was saying, "It's OK, mommy. God will somehow make this all work out." And somehow, deep down, I knew it was true. Somehow God would make it all work out.

## **Joseph**

Why did this happen to me? Ask anybody in town, they'll tell you I'm a pretty good guy. I work hard running my family's carpentry business. I got engaged to a nice girl from a nice family. Everything was going great until I found out she was pregnant. It just didn't make sense. That wasn't like the Mary I knew. A girl with a family as great as hers' doesn't do that kind of thing.

Then she came and told me this unbelievable story about an angel and the Messiah and how we were part of God's great plan. I would have thought she had gone crazy but it sounded like even she was having a hard time believing what she was telling me, like it was the truth but it was so painful she could barely get it out.

Now, I know the laws of Moses. A woman who commits adultery is to be publicly stoned to death for the shame she has brought on her family. But I didn't want to see that happen to her. Her family had suffered enough because of this. So, I was going to break things off quietly when the angel came and spoke to me. I thought now I was going crazy. But the angel said that everything Mary told me was true—that this baby was the Messiah and we were charged with his care.

Now, don't get me wrong, I'm a religious man. I believe that all the promises God made to our people will be fulfilled one day. I just didn't expect it to look like this. No one I've told about this has believed me. If God was going to do these things in such a weird way, don't you think God would have let everyone else know? Wouldn't God at least have told the religious leaders?

They're the ones who are supposed to know what God is thinking. But instead, it's up to me, a simple carpenter, and my new wife to care for this baby as if he were my son. I have no idea what will happen with this boy. But deep down inside, somehow, I know everything will be all right. Somehow God will make it all work out.

### **Prayer:**

Gracious God, in this unprecedented year of a pandemic, political tensions, sickness, loss, and cries for justice, tonight, we have an amazing event. In the cold and darkness, we hear a baby's cry, and once again, the Christ child is born into our hearts. He comes to bring us hope, peace, justice, light, and, most of all, love: your love that is immeasurable and unconditional. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, may we carry the message of your salvation and love into the world, through the way we live our lives and the ways in which we interact with others. We praise you and thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by 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.

### **Hymn: "Silent Night"**

### **Blessing**



# PRAYER LIST

Bill and Gayle Gardei, Erin, Evelyn New & Family, Erika, Earl, Amy, Jim, Juliann, Dennis Hoskins, Robert (Babe) Williams and Family, Jim Slater, Charles Gilman, Barbara Clement, Christine, Barbara Glidden, Gil & Marilyn Stebbins, Danny Westbrook, Dan Strange, Bobbie Noble, Jeanne Westcott, Durgin Pines Residents & Workers, Riverside Rest Home Residents & Workers, Those who have lost loved ones to COVID-19 Those in nursing and assisted living care, Our Denomination – Our Church Family



# WHO WE ARE

## FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



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