

**Visions United Spirit Gathering**  
**December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023 - Christmas Eve – 7:00pm**  
 How Does a Weary World Rejoice? *We Make Room.*

**Our Community Gathers**

*\*Stand as able*

**Gathering Music/Prelude**

*Martha Shaw, Piano*

**Welcome & Announcements**

*God's Doors Are Open to All!*  
*Open Doors · Open Minds · Open Hands · Open Hearts*  
 Visions United seeks to be a safe place for people of all  
 races, creeds, ages, cultural backgrounds,  
 sexual orientations and gender identities to worship.

**Acknowledgement of Land**

**Gathering Invitation**

One: There is room for you here.

If you're weary and worn,  
 or hopeful and patient.

**All: If you're tired and lost,  
 or wrapped up in hope.**

One: If you're new to this place,  
 or have been here before.

**All: Come in, come in.  
 There is room for you here.**

One: The angels are singing,

**All: "Be not afraid."**

One: The angels are singing,

**All: "Good news and great joy!"**

One: So come in, come in!

**All: There is room for us here.**

**\*Carol** (*standing*) VU#60 O Come, All Ye Faithful (vs. 1,3,4) Words English trans: Frederick Oakley 1844  
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**Lighting the Advent Candles**

One: How does a weary world hold onto hope,  
 practice peace, spread joy, or know love?

**All: How does a weary world combat cruelty?**

One: How does a weary world shine a light into our bleakest night?

**All: We do all these things with Spirit's help.  
 For tonight, a child is born in Bethlehem.**

One: Tonight, Christ draws near.

**All: Tonight, we light the Christ Candle.**

One: Tonight, we are not alone.

**All: God is near. Love has drawn close.**

**Rejoice! For God loves this weary world. Amen.**

**The Peace**

The Light of Christ be with You  
 And also with you!

**Advent Song** (*seated*)

Hope is a dream:  
 - - it comes from above.  
 Peace is a dream:  
 - - it flies with the Dove.  
 Joy is a dream that we all  
 - - need more of.  
 Hope, peace, and joy  
 come alive with our love.

Chorus:

Angels, angels singing in the night,  
 Waking to - coming to - bringing in the light:  
 Angels, angels – here the babe you see:  
 Gloria, gloria – here for you and me.

Hope is the dream  
 - - that all of us feel;  
 Peace is our dream:  
 that the nations will heal;  
 Joy is our dream  
 that we yearn for with zeal;  
 Love is our dream  
 making all of these real.

Chorus:

Angels, angels singing in the night,  
 Waking to - coming to - bringing in the light:  
 Angels, angels – here the babe you see:  
 Gloria, gloria – here for you and me.

**Gathering Prayer** (*unison*)

We have heard this story before—  
 the story of a star in the sky and a baby who was laid in a manger.  
 We have heard this story before—  
 passed down in hopeful whispers through the generations.  
 So, this night, as we lean our hearts and our ears closer,  
 make room in our souls to hear this story again.  
 Make room in us for awe.  
 Make room in us for wonder.  
 Make room for heartache and compassion. Make room in our hearts for you.  
 Pull us into the narrative,  
 that we might hear the truths in this ancient Word  
 as if it were the first time.  
 For we know that you are still speaking.  
 So speak to us again this night.  
 We are listening.  
 We are already making room. Amen.

**Special Music**

Were You There?

Words/Music: Natalie Sleeth ©1976 Hope Publishing Co.

## We Listen to the Story

**Introducing the Story**    Were you There? Where are you, *now*?

**Carol** (*standing*)    Now Mary Walked that Dusty Road

Words: © Richard Bott.

Tune: 'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime

Music: French Folksong. Arr. H. Cabena ©1971.

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**The Christmas Story – Then & Now**

The Encampment – *a poem by Sarah Jewell* ©2023

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Arranged in conversation with the Christmas Gospel

Luke 2: 1-20

**Reflection**    How Does a Weary World Rejoice? We Make Room

**Special Music**    O Holy Night

Words: John Dwight    Music: Adolphe Adam

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## **We Respond to the Story with Our Gifts & Our Prayers**

**Invitation to Generosity**    We Make Room

*Adapted from a Poem by Sarah Are Speed*

**Sharing of Our Gifts**

*Sung* VU#55 In the Bleak Midwinter (v4)    Words: Christina Rossetti 1872 Music: Gustav Holst 1906

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What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a Wise One, I would do my part;  
Yet what I can I give him - - give my heart.

**Carol** (*seated*)    VU#64 O Little Town of Bethlehem (v.1)

Words: Phillips Brooks, 1868;

Music: Lewis Henry Redner, 1868. Public Domain.

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O little town of Bethlehem  
how still we see thee lie  
above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
are met in thee tonight.

**Prayer for Bethlehem by David Guiliano**

**Sung Response** (*seated*)    VU#64 O Little Town of Bethlehem

Revised words: Trelawney Grenfell-Muir ©2023, Used with permission.

Music: Lewis Henry Redner, 1868. Public Domain.

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O little town of Bethlehem,  
So still in our minds' eye  
With candle lights and starlit nights,  
And angels drawing nigh.  
Yet in thy dark streets soundeth  
The echoed wails of grief,  
Of ancient fears, of bombs and tears,  
Of agony and strife.

**Prayer for Bethlehem by David Guiliano** Words: David Guiliano ©2008. Used with permission.

**Sung Response (seated) VU#64 O Little Town of Bethlehem (v3)**

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Music: Lewis Henry Redner, 1868. Public Domain.  
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How silently, how silently,  
the wondrous gift is given.  
So God imparts to human hearts  
the blessed gift of heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming,  
but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him,  
still the dear Christ enters in.

**Our Prayers Tonight**

*Shawn Redden, 2023.*

**Sung Response (seated) VU#64 O Little Town of Bethlehem**

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O holy Child of Bethlehem,  
Reveal to us thy Way  
Of justice, peace, and healing Grace;  
Be born in us today.  
We are the Christmas angels;  
Help us glad tidings tell.  
O walk with us, shine forth through us:  
Each one, Emmanuel!

### **We Go Forth with the Light of God's Blessing**

**Invitation to Share the Light of Christmas**

Video

©TWOTP [www.theworkofthepeople.com](http://www.theworkofthepeople.com)

I will light Candles this Christmas  
*By Howard Thurman*  
*From The Mood of Christmas*

***Please Be Careful! Always hold a lighted candle UPRIGHT.***  
***When you pass the flame, tip the unlighted candle towards the flame.***  
***The Candle lighters will light the candle of the first person in each row.***  
***Please pass the "Light of Christ" to the person next to you.***  
***After the candles are lit, we will sing together Silent Night.***

**Carol (seated) VU#67**      Silent Night

Words: Joseph Mohr 1818, English trans.  
Trans: John F. Young 1863, et al. All rights reserved.  
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**Blessing**

**Music for the Journey**

**Merry Christmas!**