



LA JOLLA
UNITED METHODIST



ARE WE
THERE YET?
THE JOURNEY

Sunday, December 28, 2025
First Sunday After Christmas
www.lajollaunitedmethodist.org

WE GATHER IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

Gathering Music

Still, Still, Still

Arr. Philip Ledger
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Call to Worship

One: Children of God, seekers and travelers, we gather at the threshold of a new year.

All: We gather to seek, find, and follow the Light.

One: The prophet Isaiah calls across the ages: “Arise, shine; for your light has come.”

All: We gather to seek, find, and follow the Light.

One: The magi left everything familiar and followed a star into the unknown—and when they found a child who looked nothing like a king, they knelt and worshiped.

All: We gather to seek, find, and follow the Light.

One: Let us turn our faces toward the God who shows up among us as a vulnerable child, a wandering teacher, and a foot-washing servant who is the salvation of the world.

All: We gather to seek, find, and follow the Light today and every day. Amen.

Congregational Introit

Gloria, In Excelsis Deo

UMH 238

Glo - - - - ri - a, in excelsis Deo! Glo - - - - ri - a, in excelsis Deo!

Welcome

† Opening Hymn

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

UMH 218

1. It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:
“Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven’s all gracious King.”
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.
2. Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats o’er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains, they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o’er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.
3. And ye, beneath life’s crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,
look now! for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!

4. For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.

Prayers of the People

*A Pastor will begin a time of prayer and name those for whom our congregation is praying.
Online Worshipers may type prayer requests in the Live Chat, taking care for privacy.*

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

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.

WE HEAR THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Scripture

Matthew 2:1-12 (NRSVue)

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.' "

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt

down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Scriptural Response

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: **Thanks be to God! Amen**

Congregation Carols

Away in a Manger

UMH 217

1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.
2. The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes;
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.
3. Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay close by me forever, and love me, I pray;
bless all the dear children in thy tender care, and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

O Little Town of Bethlehem (v1-2)

UMH 230

1. 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.
2. For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth!

What Child Is This?

UMH 219

1. What child is this who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?

Refrain

This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the Son of Mary.

2. Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.

Refrain

This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the Son of Mary.

3. So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh, come, peasant, king, to own him;
the King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him.

Refrain

This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the Son of Mary.

Message

Are We There Yet?

Rev. Bob Rhodes

WE RESPOND TO THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

Response to the Word

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory: Congregational Carol

We Three Kings (v1-3)

UMH 254

1. We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.

Refrain

O star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

2. Born a King on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never, over us all to reign.

Refrain

O star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

3. Frankincense to offer have I; incense owns a Deity nigh;
prayer and praising, voices raising, worshiping God on high.

Refrain

O star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

† **Doxology**

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

UMH 94

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures here below;
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Praise God, the source of all our gifts!
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

† **Prayer of Confession**

All: God of stars and seekers, we confess that we are often slow to follow where you lead. The magi left everything familiar and traveled into the unknown, trusting only a light in the sky. We cling to what we know. They offered their gifts to a child who looked nothing like a king. We withhold what we have until we are certain it will be received according to our expectation. They went home by another road, quietly defying the powers that sought to do harm. We “go along to get along,” reluctant to risk the disruption that faithfulness requires. Forgive our hesitation, our misplaced caution, and our fear of the unfamiliar road. Give us the courage to seek, the persistence to follow, and the grace to kneel when we realize we’re in your presence. Amen.

One: The star still shines. The God who drew the magi from distant lands draws us, too—with patience, with grace, and with unrelenting love. No matter how far we have wandered or how long we have hesitated, we are always welcome at the manger. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

All: In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God! Amen.

WE FOLLOW CHRIST INTO THE WORLD

† **Closing Hymn**

Joy to the World

UMH 246

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

2. Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
3. No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.
4. He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness,
and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

† **Benediction**

Postlude

Angels from the Realms of Glory

Arr. Hal H. Hopson
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Liturgical elements from *Discipleship Ministries (UMC)* and *The Abingdon Worship Annual*.

- Liturgist:** Rebecca Tseng- Smith
Flowers: from the Rushing Family in honor of the Christmas season and celebration of time with family.
Organist: Bob Wuertz
Pianist: Rebecca Cosford
Ushers: Rod Betts, Don Lincoln, Peter McCreight,
Tech Team: AJ Prat, Cam Rhodes

LJUMC Ministry Team

Rev. Bob Rhodes, Lead Pastor; Bob Wuertz, Music Ministries Director;
Theresa Erb, Office Manager; Emilio Valente, Information Technology Director;
Erin Wyer, NS Executive Director