

## Order of Worship

### Gathering

Prelude

Words of Welcome / † Mission Statement

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

Announcements

Dan Loven-Crum

Memorial Sunday

Call to Worship

Pam Kregg

### Hearing God's Word

Children's Moment

Rebecca Morello

† Congregational Carol #151 (vs. 1, 2):

*The First Noel*

Scripture: Numbers 6:22-27

Pam Kregg

Reflection

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

† Congregational Carol #153:

*It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*

### Responding to God's Word

Communion

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

† Congregational Carol #165:

*Once in Royal David's City*

Pastoral Prayer / † Lord's Prayer

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

† Congregational Carol #151 (vs. 3, 4, 5):

*The First Noel*

The Basket

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

Countryside Blessing

Geoff Kregg

Postlude

OUR WORSHIP HAS CONCLUDED.

NOW OUR SERVICE BEGINS.

† Indicates those places where those who are able are invited to stand.

Alex Ritter, organ



## Who We Are:

We are an inclusive, open and affirming family of faith, welcoming all to God's table of love and acceptance.

We are diverse, yet united by Christ's example.

We care for one another, support one another and challenge one another to become all that God creates us to be.

We work together to nurture our community and to promote peace, equality and justice in our conflicted world.

**Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones** is an Associate Conference Minister for the Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota Conferences of the United Church of Christ. She attended Lancaster Theological Seminary and graduated with her Master of Divinity in 2006, pastored in various positions for 11 years in Central Pennsylvania before moving with her family to Hawaii in 2014 where she was a local church pastor on the island of Lana'i for 3 years and a hospital chaplain on Kauai for 4 years. She and her family have lived in Omaha since 2021. Her husband, Don, is a 7-grade math teacher at McMillan Middle School, and together they have 3 children: Jack, 16; Irene, 13; and Maggie, 11.



## Music notes:

Once in Royal David's City is famous for its use in the famous Lessons and Carols services at King's College, Cambridge. The text was written by a prolific Irish hymn writer named Cecil Frances Alexander. In addition to hymn writing and poetry, she was known for her charitable work and social advocacy. The hymn is controversial as some theologians dismiss the text's portrayal of Jesus as "little, weak and helpless" as reflective of the cultural patronizing of children that occurred in the Victorian era, pointing to scripture about Jesus speaking in the temple as a child to the amazement of those who listened. This sentiment seems to come from a place of insecurity and removes humanity from the life of Jesus which is important to emphasize. Plus, in fairness to Mrs. Alexander, I would imagine these same theologians have patronizing attitudes towards children and their role in church and life.

**continued on the back:**

### continued from the front:

A more reasonable take on the text is that it reflects the frailty of humanity and Christ being fully human and experiencing life - from the circumstances of his birth to the circumstances of his death. Perhaps the only commonly sung Christmas carol that doesn't mention the birth of Christ, *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* focuses on the song of the angels: "peace on Earth, and goodwill to men." The author was an ordained Unitarian minister and one of the earliest social gospel hymn writers. The context for the hymn's creation was the social turmoil during the lead-up to the Civil War and the just-ended Mexican-American war. Obviously controversial at the time, and to some degree even now (the third verse is excluded from many hymnals), it is one of the few hymns that embodies each disparate theme of Advent and Christmastide. Hope for a time when humanity 'sends back the song which now the angels sing,' peace to counter division and anxiety, a love to carry us through 'life's crushing load,' and a distant yet tangible joy embodied in the coming of Christ.

## Joys and Concerns

*Join us as we pray for our congregation members and their loved ones who are on our Joys and Concerns list every week on Thursdays at 9:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary. If you have someone you would like us to pray for, or a joy you would like to share, or if you would like to be included on the list in the bulletin or be on Countryside's Prayer Chain, contact the Office at 402-391-0350 or [office@countrysideucc.org](mailto:office@countrysideucc.org)*

### JOYS:

**Matt and Autumn Cox** have been blessed by the safe arrival of their first grandchild, Charlotte Vivian. Charlotte arrived on December 27 weighing 5lbs 15 ounces and is the daughter of their oldest daughter, Laorea Thompson. Congratulations to the entire Cox family!

**Doug Dushan** had an appointment at the Iowa Eye Clinic on December 23 and got wonderful news! His vision has had a remarkable reversal of loss since the shot he received here in Omaha. They will want to watch the pressure over the next several months and will likely do additional shots as necessary. His vision will never be perfect but it could still continue to improve over the next couple of months. Doug wants to thank all of you for the prayers and to say that he has felt a warm presence around him for weeks.

### CONCERNS:

We are asking for prayers for the **Kathleen and Todd Samland** family. Todd's dad, Ted, who has been in hospice passed away. He lived in Washington state and the distance makes it hard for everyone. God, please give the Samland family peace and strength during this difficult time.

**Rodge Bickerstaff** is in Bellevue Medical Center in ICU with acute pancreatitis possibly related to gall stones. He is suffering from other ongoing medical conditions and is in a great deal of pain. Please pray for relief from the pain and complete healing in his body. Please no visitors at this time.

Please offer prayers for **Sharon and Rick Royers** as they battle a miserable case of COVID.

Prayers please for **Renee Siems**. She has been diagnosed with RSV which is especially troublesome as she also has asthma. We are hoping that she can continue to heal at home and not be admitted to the hospital.

**Todd and Linda Hall** request prayers for a successful surgery and a good recovery for their daughter, Heather. She slipped on the ice while walking her dog, fell and broke 5 bones in her left leg and ankle - bad breaks that require metal plates and screws. Heather is an occupational therapist and is worried she will not be able to return to work for three to six months.

**Marylinn (Andy) Smith** fell and broke her arm. She is at Old Mill Rehab Center behind Huber Chevrolet. Andy is asking for prayers for her.

Prayers for **Shannon (Rick) Avard's** family. Her mother has tested positive for Covid and her sister has been admitted to the hospital with a stroke. Fast action appears to have promised a positive outcome for her sister but prayers for that would be most appreciated. This has been a particularly hard year for the Avard family and we want to lift them all in prayer.

**Ferde (Mimi) Goings** had knee surgery last week and is back home doing well and recuperating. We lift up Ferde in prayer for complete healing after the surgery.

Countryside member **John (Rosemarie) Adair** passed away on December 14 at age 93. Please keep his wife Rosemarie and his family in prayer in this time of sorrow. A Celebration of Life will be announced at a later date.

Continue praying for **Don Sarton's** friend Rev. David Van Heyningin who is recovering from a head injury. David has hit another speed bump. He has had labored breathing for the past couple of days. They have discovered that he has another sepsis. So we pray.

Pray for **Molly Anderson**. She took a spill and has a bad bone bruise on her shoulder and whiplash. She and Mitch are now living in their new house and Molly says she has a new take on Boxing Day as they are surrounded by boxes.

Continue prayers for **Pat Walstrom**. The terrible pain in her lower back and down her hip has only slightly improved but she is alert and very communicative. Based on X-rays, her doctor was pretty confident she has a pinched nerve in her lower spine. He referred her to a neurosurgeon.