



IN JOINT FELLOWSHIP

*Sustaining a vibrant and growing congregation through Christian spiritual transformation,  
making our work and the church relevant and visible.*

(510) 465-4793

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1255 First Avenue Oakland, CA 94606

## Angels Among Us: #Do Not Be Afraid



#morelife  
#donotbeafraid

*“God gave us the gift of life; it is up to us to give  
ourselves the gift of living well.”*

Voltaire

*“#morelife”*

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December 26, 2021  
Sunday after Christmas  
*Celebration of Divine Worship*

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WELCOME

Rev. Pamela Kurtz, *Pastor*

INTROIT

“Coventry Carol”

arr. Cynthia Dobrinski

Sonos Handbell Ensemble

*Lullay, thou little tiny child*

*Sleep well, lully, lullay*

*And smile in dreaming, little one*

*Sleep well, lully, lullay*

*Oh sisters two, what may we do*

*To preserve on this day*

*This poor youngling for whom we sing*

*Sleep well, lully, lullay*

*Farewell, lully, lullay*

*Herod the king in his raging*

*Set forth upon this day*

*By his decree, no life spare thee*

*All children young to slay*

*All children young to slay*

*Then woe is me, poor child, for thee*

*And ever mourn and say,*

*For thy parting, neither say nor sing*

*Farewell, lully, lullay*

*Farewell, lully, lullay*

*And when the stars fill darkened skies*

*In their far venture, stay*

*And smile as dreaming, little one*

*Farewell, lully, lullay*

*Dream now, lully, lullay*

OPENING PRAYER and SUNG RESPONSE [*responsive*]

Margaret LeWright  
& Laurel Williams

There are angels among us that may not meet the eye  
There are messages of life coming from a choir on high  
But don't just look up:  
for the way God works  
is to plant more life right here on earth  
just like it was with Jesus' birth.

There are angels among us,  
there are angels among us,  
bringing life on earth.

Holy Living God, Blessed Jesus, Guiding Spirit,  
*alight within us your flames of life this day.*

Grant us openness to hear your message.

*Grant us courage to be your messengers in the world,  
creating more life in the midst of fear.*

(WDS; *Angels Among Us: Do Not Be Afraid*)

Sung Response

He Came Down

TFWS 2085 (adapt.)

*He came down that we may have life;  
He came down that we may have life;  
He came down that we may have life,  
Hallelujah forevermore.*

## A SONG, SCRIPTURE AND A PRAYER

Opening Song

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

UMH 240

- 1. Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King,  
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;  
with th' angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"*
- 2. Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord;  
late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th' incarnate Deity,  
pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.  
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"*
- 3. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,  
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"*

Scripture

Matthew 2:1-18, (CEB)

Margaret LeWright

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him."

When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. They said, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

*You, Bethlehem, land of Judah,  
by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah,  
because from you will come one who governs,  
who will shepherd my people Israel."*

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him." When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood

over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

When the magi had departed, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon search for the child in order to kill him." Joseph got up and, during the night, took the child and his mother to Egypt. He stayed there until Herod died. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: I have called my son out of Egypt.

When Herod knew the magi had fooled him, he grew very angry. He sent soldiers to kill all the children in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding territory who were two years old and younger, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. This fulfilled the word spoken through Jeremiah the prophet:

*A voice was heard in Ramah,  
weeping and much grieving.  
Rachel weeping for her children,  
and she did not want to be comforted,  
because they were no more.*

## Scriptural Response

## In the Darkness

Margaret LeWright  
& Laurel Williams

We wait in the darkness,  
expectantly, longingly, anxiously, thoughtfully.

*The darkness is our friend.*

In the darkness of the womb,  
we have all been nurtured and protected.

*In the darkness of the womb  
the Christ-child was made ready for the journey into light.*

It is only in the darkness  
that we can see the splendour of the universe -  
blankets of stars, the solitary glowings of the planets.

*It was the darkness that allowed the Magi to find the star  
that guided them to where the Christ-child lay.*

In the darkness of the night,  
desert people find relief from the cruel relentless heat of the sun.

*In the blessed desert darkness  
Mary and Joseph were able to flee with the infant Jesus  
to safety in Egypt.*

In the darkness of sleep,  
we are soothed and restored, healed and renewed.

*In the darkness of sleep, dreams rise up.  
God spoke to Joseph and the wise men through dreams.  
God is speaking still.*

Sometimes in the solitude of the darkness  
our fears and concerns, our hopes and visions  
rise to the surface.

We come face to face with ourselves  
and with the road that lies ahead of us.  
And in that same darkness  
we find companionship for the journey.

*In that same darkness  
we sometimes allow ourselves to wonder and worry  
whether the human race is going to survive.*

And then, in the darkness  
we know that you are with us, O God,  
yet still we await your coming.

*In the darkness that contains both our hopelessness and our hope,  
we watch for a sign of God's hope.*

For you are with us, O God,  
in darkness and in light.

*~ from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand*

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rev. Pamela Kurtz, *Pastor*

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

Ecumenical Version (UMH 894)

\*Please feel free to use the name of your choice for God that speaks to your soul.

Our \*Creator in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

## HOLY COMMUNION

### Prayer of Confession and Resolve [*responsive*]

Margaret LeWright & Laurel Williams

Spirit of Life and Love, God of grace and mercy, Source of all things that changes us as we cannot change ourselves,

*We gather this morning as a covenanted community of spiritual seekers, coming together in a rainbow of diversity united by our conviction that the wounds of this world can be healed through compassion, forgiveness, acceptance, and courage. And by healing we do not mean restored to some mythical original purity, but brought to a new place, with greater wisdom, wholeness and liberation than could have been envisioned before.*

We know that each one of us is on a journey, and all our journeys place us before forks in the road. These places ask us to make choices, saying yes to some things, saying no to others, grieving in what we must leave behind, rejoicing in the blessings, often unexpected, that come our way.

*In these journeys, some will choose to walk with us, and some will choose another path. Some will pause for a while, withdrawing into their own places of transformation where we cannot follow. Some of these partings happen gently and lovingly, others with judgment and disappointment.*

It is our calling to accept these things as a testament to our strength and our fragility, and to trust in the process, even as we fear the unknown, even as whispers of beloved memories draw us deep into our own hearts, even when we see more clearly where we have come from than where we are going. The journey asks us to keep walking.

*Spirit of Life, we ask for patience, we ask for understanding, we ask for compassion, we ask for hope and gratitude so that we may welcome our collective and individual journeys with open hearts, open minds, and open hands. Amen and blessed be.* *Krista Taves (adapted)*

## TIME OF SILENCE FOR PRAYERS OF CONFESSION AND HOPE

### Assurance of Grace

Rev. Pamela Kurtz, *Pastor*

Beloved ones, hear this good news:

Seeking God's redemption through the new born King, we have made ourselves ready to be renewed. In God's great forgiveness, we are brought to a new place, where we see the world as you see it, with greater wisdom, wholeness and liberation than could have been envisioned before. Thanks be to God, for this gift of new life.

*Praise be to God in the newborn King, we are forgiven! Amen!*

### PASSING THE PEACE

*As forgiven people Living in the season of miracles,  
let us share peace with our siblings in the world!*

## SHARING IN COMMUNION OF THE BREAD AND CUP

### MESSAGE

### “Angels Among Us: #morelife”

Rev. Pamela L. Kurtz, *Pastor*

### RESPONDING TO THE WORD [VIDEO]

### The Prayer

## LIVING AS THE CHURCH, GRATITUDES, OFFERINGS

Living as the Church

Gratitude Times

Offering Time

Offering Words

### THANKSGIVING SONG

God is Good, All the Time W&S 3026

*5. God is good, God is good all the time.*

*God is good, God is good all the time.*

*As our thanks and our praise now we raise,*

*God is good, God is good all the time.*

*Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and ev'rywhere;  
go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.*

**1. While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,  
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.**

*Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and ev'rywhere;  
go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.*

**2 The shepherds feared and trembled when lo, above the earth  
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth.**

*Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and ev'rywhere;  
go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.*

**3 Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,  
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.**

*Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and ev'rywhere;  
go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.*

### CLOSING PRAYER *(responsive)*

Margaret LeWright & Laurel Williams

In all our travelling

*May your footsteps guide us*

In our journeying to work and returning

*May your footsteps guide us*

Within our homes and families

*May your footsteps guide us*

In our leisure time together

*May your footsteps guide us*

In difficult situations and conflict

*May your footsteps guide us*

As we stumble on the way

*May your footsteps guide us*

In the travelling of our faith

*May your footsteps guide us*

As we place our trust in you

*May your footsteps guide us*

In all our travelling. Lord,

*May it be your footsteps in which we place our feet. Amen.*

*PraiseandWorship.com*

### POSTLUDE

Rise Up, Shepherds, and Follow

Spiritual arr. Mark Hayes

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