



8:45 a.m. + December 29, 2024 + The First Sunday of Christmas

*When the song of the angels is stilled, then the true work of Christmas begins.*  
Howard Thurman, 20th century

Coming into the Loving Presence

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

*“Joy to the World”*

## The Promised One Comes

from *Hebrews 1*

*In many times and many ways in the past, God has spoken to the ancestors in the prophets. In these last days, God spoke to us in a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds. Who being the Brightness of the Glory and Image of His Presence, bearing all things by the Word of His Power - through Himself having made a cleansing of our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Greatness in the Highest, having become so much more powerful than the Messengers, as he inherited a more excellent Name than they. For to which of the Messengers did he ever say, "You are My Son. Today, I have begotten You." And again, "I will be to him as a Father and he will be to me as a Son"? And when again he brings in the Firstborn into the world, He says, "Let all the Messengers of God prostrate before Him." And to the Messengers, indeed, He says, "Who makes His Messengers spirits and His ministers a flame of fire"? But to the Son He says, "Your throne, O God, is to the Age of Ages, a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and despised lawlessness. Therefore, because of this, God has anointed You - God, Your God - with the oil of gladness above Your companions."*

## The Sign of Divine Love

*"Love Came Down at Christmas"*

*Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas; stars and angels gave the sign.*

*Worship we the God-head, Love incarnate, Love divine;  
Worship we our Jesus, but where-with for sacred sign?*

*Love shall be our token, love be yours and love be mine;  
Love to God and neighbor, love for plea and gift and sign.*

## We Quietly Pray the Psalm (use these words or your own words)

inspired by from *Psalms 143:5-10*

*God, I call to mind significant times I have experienced your Presence this past year . . . .*

*I give thanks for the beauty I have seen in the created world . . . .*

*I consider what your hands have done in the lives of people I know . . . .*

*I open my hands and lift them wide to you, open and expectant.*

*Fill my thirsty life with your love, with your compassion, with your mercy, with your justice.*

*God, don't leave me to my own wiles and manipulations.*

*I see so little of what is really **Real** that if left to myself I'd destroy my own life and those around me.*

*Speak into me your never-ending love at the dawn of this new day.*

*Show me the first steps of the path into my future,*

*the steps that will draw me deeper into your Heart,*

*the steps that will draw out of me my most authentic Self,*

*the steps that will lead me to lay down my life for those you love and gave your own Life for.*

*Deliver me from my fear of taking the next risky step. Heal my need to control the future.*

*The only security I need is your Presence.*

*For my heart's desire is to walk with you into the days ahead. Walk with me and show me how to do that.*

*Give me your Spirit as a Guide along this path you have invited me to walk.*

*And when the time comes, give me the grace to soar.*

## Silence for Reflecting on What Has Been

- ◆ Sit quietly and reflect on your experience of 2024. Ask God to give you clearness of vision to see honestly.
- ◆ As you look back, for what would you give thanks to God?
- ◆ What from this past year needs to be healed in you? In those around you? In the world?

## Affirming the Inner Light

*"Lord Jesus Christ"*

*Lord Jesus Christ, your Light shines within us. Let not my doubts nor my darkness speak to me.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, your Light shines within us. Let my heart always welcome your love.*

*Simeon came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and blessed God, saying:*

*“Lord, now you are releasing your servant according to your word, in peace.*

*For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples: a Light for revelation to the nations, and the Glory of your people Israel.”*

### Preparing the Temple of Our Hearts for Communion

**“O Come, All Ye Faithful”**

***O come, let us adore him; O come, let us adore him;***

***O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!***

### Christmas Holy Communion

***adapted from Contemplative Invocations***

*O Holy One, O Light beyond all worlds, Eternal Fire at rest and One within your Dazzling Darkness. We come as lamps of clay who need Your oil, Your Light, Your burning Fire within. O move to purify and cleanse the soul, to light the wick of mind and heart and so create a space within us, a womb of birth, a place to bring to life Your Eternal Word.*

***Expectant and in hope we await Your Living Presence to move inside our souls. This breath, this rushing wind, this seed of life, to bless these gifts and everything that is offered here, presented here to You.***

*We are the waiting place of rest, where You are born in us in time, and we in You eternally. This mystery of Christmas is where God and humankind unite as One – one mind, one heart, one body, one breath. One bread, one wine, one thirst, one drink of satisfaction from the cup of life.*

***Expectant and in hope we grow in You and You in us. We know this secret from within the soul, by listening and by living. By longing for new births along the Way, we sense the Kingdom of God within us, striving to emerge from the womb of our heart.***

*So now we wait in pain, in joy, in hope, despair, in desperation and in need. In this good Darkness we dare to risk Your pregnancy of Light, for You are ever with us from within.*

***O God, Emmanuel, come near at last to birth us into Light. We fling wide the portals of our hearts. We are Your Temple, Your People, Your Priests to You and to the world. Fill us now with Your Presence and reveal Your Grace and Love in and through us.***

*Now we take and eat, we lift and drink, in deep remembrance of You whose Way becomes for us the secret that now stirs within, and comes to birth within us as sacrament and Spirit-blessed, new food, new light, a taste that ignites in all the longing to return to You, our True Source and Home.*

### Silence for Reflecting on What Will Be

- ◆ With what kind of inner stance would you like to move into 2025? What do you desire for your inner life?
- ◆ As best you can discern, what is yours to do in 2025? What is emerging from you? What do you need to bring forth?
- ◆ You may want to pray a quiet prayer of opening yourself to God . . . or make some simple gesture that symbolizes your intention with God for the days ahead.

### Grace for Unfolding from the Center

***from Psalms for Praying, Psalm 132***

*Enter into the Silence, into the Heart of Truth;*

***For herein lies the Great Mystery where life is ever unfolding.***

***Herein the Divine Plan is made known, the Plan all are invited to serve.***

*Listen for the music of the Holy Word in the resounding Silence of the universe.*

*May balance and harmony be your aim as you are drawn into the Heart of Love.*

***Those who follow the Way of Love with calm and faith-filled intent,***

***Know that all is working toward healing and wholeness.***

*And may the healing power of Love lift you*

*from the limitations of fear and ignorance into the arms of freedom.*

*May the peace of the Spirit bless you, and lead you on life's journey.*

Singing with Simeon

*Let Your servant now go in peace, O Lord,  
Now go in peace according to your word.*

*“Nunc Dimittis”*

Receiving a Good Word



## Our Staff

**Haley Brown** – Associate Director of The Anchor House

**Courtney Garrison** – Ministry Assistant

**Peter Johns** – Associate Director of Contemplative Worship

**Zachary Montasser** – Violinist

**Rev. Rachel Sciretti** – Associate Pastor

**Rev. Dr. Michael Sciretti, Jr.** – Pastor of The Center

## Today's Music

*“Joy to the World”* – Isaac Watts & Lowell Mason, *“Love Came Down at Christmas”* – Christina Rossetti & Traditional, *“Lord Jesus Christ”* – Jacques Berthier, *“O Come All Ye Faithful”* – John F. Wade, *“Nunc Dimittis”* – Jacques Berthier

For information about The Center for Christian Spirituality and upcoming events, visit:

[www.TheCenterFCS.org](http://www.TheCenterFCS.org).

Please register your presence in the notebooks in the foyer.

If you have a prayer request or seeking support, please contact Rachel Sciretti, [rscoretti@chapelwood.org](mailto:rscoretti@chapelwood.org).

## Giving to The Center

*All of us are part of a never-ending process of giving and receiving. Life is not possible without this organic flow. What we co-create together here at The Center for Christian Spirituality is not possible without our conscious participation in this holy activity of freely receiving and freely giving. In this light, we invite you to financially give to The Center in response to what you have received today or throughout our contemplative offerings. Using the QR code will take you to a page where you can make a one-time offering or recurring gift. Thank you for your contribution and investment.*



## Receiving the Grace of Epiphany: January Guided Silent Retreat

Saturday, January 4 | The Anchor House Grounds | 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. | \$20

*In our January Guided Silent Retreat, after a time of Centering, Michael will give a short presentation on the ancient as well as the inner meaning of the treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh. As a part of this day, participants will experience anointing with holy oil and a contemplative communion service. There will be plenty of time for reading and reflection, prayerful walking of our labyrinth, and space for prayerful art. We don't want anyone to miss out because of pricing. Contact Haley for information on scholarships at [hbrown@chapelwood.org](mailto:hbrown@chapelwood.org).*



## The Way of The Anchorite: Towards a Three-Fold Rule of Life

Thursdays, January 9, 16, 23, 30 | The Anchor House | 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

*In this new class offered by Michael, students will be led through a simple model for developing a “Rule” or “Way” of Life. This model is inspired by the monastic tradition of the “anchorite” – someone who withdrew from distractions to deepen their relationship with God, others, and the created world. To aid them, they committed themselves to certain practices that helped them to more consciously be anchored: in God, to Church, and for the World. In this 4-week class, Michael will help you determine what are your obstacles and facilitating conditions for anchoring in God, anchoring to Community, and being an anchoring presence in your World.*



## The Anchor House Hours

*Our normal hours for The Anchor House will resume on Tuesday, January 7.*