



**Special Music**

“It Came Upon a Midnight Clear”  
by Richard Storrs Willis, arr. Renfrow

*Liz Shuhan, flute*  
*Andi Merrill, piano*

**Scripture****Matthew 1: 18-25***George Gull*

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. When Mary his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn't want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly. As he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled:

*Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son,  
And they will call him, Emmanuel.*

When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife.

Hear What the Spirit is Saying to the Church!  
**Thanks Be to God!**

**Message**

“I Choose Love”

*Pastor Alicia Wood***RESPONDING****\*Hymn of Response**

“I Choose Love”

*Insert***Prayers of the People & The Lord's Prayer***Jami Breedlove-Crouch***Offering Our Gifts to God****Offertory**

“Bring a Torch, Jeannette Isabella”  
Traditional French carol

*Molly MacMillan, piano***\*Doxology**

“What Gift Can We Bring”

UMH #87, v.4

**\*Prayer of Dedication (in unison)**

**Faithful God of unfolding plans, when our certainty falters and our expectations collapse, you are still at work, inviting us into grace that redefines and redeems. Like Joseph, we bring our gifts and lay down our plans, trusting that your Spirit can shape our offering into something greater than we imagined. Let these gifts and our lives be signs of humility and hope. May they help carry Christ into a world still longing for peace, hungry for love, and needing redemption. We pray in the name of the one who is Emmanuel—God with us. Amen.**

**SENDING FORTH****Announcements & Closing Thought****\*Closing Hymn**

“On This Day, Earth Shall Ring”

UMH #248, v.1, 2, 4

**\*Dismissal with Blessing**

**Postlude**

“Giga from Sonata in F Major”  
by G. F. Handel

*Liz Shuhan, flute*  
*Andi Merrill, piano*

-----**PRAYERS**-----

For **Prayer Chain Requests**, confidential concerns seen only by those who participate in the Prayer Chain, please contact Jami Breedlove-Crouch at [lovingcare@stpaulsithaca.org](mailto:lovingcare@stpaulsithaca.org) or Pastor Alicia at [pastor@stpaulsithaca.org](mailto:pastor@stpaulsithaca.org).

**Prayer Requests:** Family of Melissa Gould; Joan Reppert; Linda Yetter; Ruth Lovelace; Andrea Downing Zheng and family; Larry Roberts; Mary and Matthew Boardman. Pray for healing within the United Methodist Church as we live into the new reality of being a fully inclusive denomination.

Prayer requests will be published in the bulletin for four weeks. If you would like someone to remain on the list, Jami Breedlove-Crouch at [lovingcare@stpaulsithaca.org](mailto:lovingcare@stpaulsithaca.org) or 607-269- 5509. Please remember that we also need permission from the person listed.

***Christmas Eve at St. Paul's UMC, Ithaca***

Join us as we retell and celebrate the birth of Jesus with Christmas carols and candles on **December 24th at 7pm**. God's love came down at Christmas in an unlikely time of the Pax Romana. It was a time in need of hope. We pray our time together may bring back hope in our times, today.

***Singing and Sweaters on December 28th***

The Sunday after Christmas, December 28th, will be worship filled with Christmas hymns and lightheartedness. We'll celebrate the birth of Jesus and look forward to the coming of the Magi. Please join us wearing an "ugly Christmas sweater" ready to sing and celebrate!

***St. Paul's Ministries ~ Week of December 21st, 2025***

**Sunday, December 21st – Fourth Sunday of Advent**

10:30am – Worship with – Sanctuary  
10:45am – Faith Explorers – Rm. 115, Main Floor  
11:30am – Christmas Reception – Memorial Room

**Monday, December 22nd**

7:00pm – Advent Study Group – Memorial Room/ZOOM

**Tuesday, December 23rd**

**Wednesday, December 24th – Christmas Eve**

7:00pm – Christmas Eve Service – Sanctuary

**Thursday December 25th – Christmas Day**

Church Offices Closed

**Friday, December 26th**

Church Offices Closed

**Saturday, December 27th**

**Sunday, December 28th– First Sunday after Christmas**

10:30am – Worship– Sanctuary

**Children and Worship** – Children are always welcome in worship! To help keep small hands busy, we have books and toys on the black cart near the main sanctuary door. **Children ages 4 to 11 are invited to participate in “Faith Explorers” following the “Message for Children” segment during worship (except on Communion Sundays).**

### ***Donation Needed to Help Loaves and Fishes***

We're all familiar with the amazing work Loaves & Fishes does helping to feed Ithaca. This year in lieu of gift cards, the Mission Team has chosen to bless them with a much needed immersion blender, which can be costly. If you can help, please write a check to “SPUMC,” with “Loaves and Fishes” written in the Memo line. If you prefer a cash donation, please make sure to write “Loaves and Fishes” on the envelope. Thank you for your generosity!

### ***New Study Group to Start in January***

In January we'll begin a small group study, "The United Methodist Way: Living Our Beliefs." We'll explore a basic explanation of the beliefs and practices of the United Methodist Church. Uncover a deeper understanding and experience of Christian faith as we embrace the United Methodist way. Join us Mondays at 7:00pm or Tuesdays at 11:00am for a hybrid gathering. To sign up, contact Dee at [office@stpaulsithaca.org](mailto:office@stpaulsithaca.org). Questions can be directed to Pastor Alicia at [pastor@stpaulsithaca.org](mailto:pastor@stpaulsithaca.org).

### ***Christmas Eve Offering***

St. Paul's 2025 Christmas offering will support two causes: The Sanctuary & Organ Renovation Fund and Cornell Protestant Cooperative Ministries, an ecumenical ministry with Cornell students seeking faith development and nurturing. Your generous gifts are greatly appreciated. Please make checks payable to “St. Paul’s UMC” and write “Christmas Offering” on the memo line

**\* Please note: Church offices will be closed from the afternoon of Wednesday December 24<sup>th</sup>, through Saturday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Offices re-open at 9:00am on Sunday, January 4<sup>th</sup>. Have a wonderful Christmas holiday!**

#### **Our Staff**

**Rev. Alicia (Pastor Alicia) Wood** / Senior Pastor / [pastor@stpaulsithaca.org](mailto:pastor@stpaulsithaca.org)  
**Jami Breedlove-Crouch** / Loving Care Ministries Coordinator / [lovingcare@stpaulsithaca.org](mailto:lovingcare@stpaulsithaca.org)  
**Dee Levine** / Church Administrative Assistant & Communications / [office@stpaulsithaca.org](mailto:office@stpaulsithaca.org)  
**Michelle Eells** / Business & Building Ministries Coordinator / [business@stpaulsithaca.org](mailto:business@stpaulsithaca.org)  
**Maia Finkel** / Choral and Ensembles Director / [choirdirector@stpaulsithaca.org](mailto:choirdirector@stpaulsithaca.org)  
**Molly MacMillan** / Pianist / [pianist@stpaulsithaca.org](mailto:pianist@stpaulsithaca.org)  
**David Kingsley** / Technical Director / [dkingsley@stpaulsithaca.org](mailto:dkingsley@stpaulsithaca.org)  
**Dorothy Preston** / Festival Chimes Director / [dpreston@stpaulsithaca.org](mailto:dpreston@stpaulsithaca.org)  
**Sue Orzel** / Custodian

#### **St. Paul's United Methodist Church**

402 North Aurora St., Ithaca, NY

Find us at [www.stpaulsithaca.org](http://www.stpaulsithaca.org), Facebook and Instagram

**Church Office Hours are 9:00 AM-12:00 PM Sunday – Thursday**

Office Phone: 607-273-5971 Pastoral Care Line: 607-269-5509

## 242 Love Came Down at Christmas



1. Love came down at Christ - mas, Love all love - ly, Love di - vine;  
 2. Wor - ship we the God - head, Love in - car - nate, Love di - vine;  
 3. Love shall be our to - ken; love be yours and love be mine;



Love was born at Christ - mas; star and an - gels gave the sign.  
 wor - ship we our Je - sus, but where - with for sa - cred sign?  
 love to God and all men,\* love for plea and gift and sign.



\*"neighbor" may be substituted for "all men"

WORDS: Christina G. Rossetti, 1885

MUSIC: Trad. Irish melody; harm. by David Evans, 1927; alt.

Harm. by permission of Oxford University Press

GARTAN

67.67

# I Choose Love

Lindy Thompson

Mark A. Miller

♩ = 48

Piano

The piano introduction consists of two staves. The right hand plays chords in the treble clef, and the left hand plays a bass line in the bass clef. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 6/8. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 48.

5

1. In the midst of pain, I choose love.  
2. In the midst of war, I choose peace.  
3. When my world falls down, I will rise.  
4. In the midst of pain, I choose love.

The vocal line begins at measure 5. It features a melodic line in the treble clef with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: 1. In the midst of pain, I choose love. 2. In the midst of war, I choose peace. 3. When my world falls down, I will rise. 4. In the midst of pain, I choose love.

The piano accompaniment continues with chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The key signature and time signature remain the same as in the first system.

8

— In the midst of pain, I choose love.  
— In the midst of war, I choose peace.  
— When my world falls down, I will rise.  
— In the midst of pain, I choose love.

The vocal line continues at measure 8. It features a melodic line in the treble clef with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: — In the midst of pain, I choose love. — In the midst of war, I choose peace. — When my world falls down, I will rise. — In the midst of pain, I choose love.

The piano accompaniment continues with chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The key signature and time signature remain the same as in the first system.

## What Gift Can We Bring

*Unison*

1. What gift can we bring, what present, what to-ken?  
 2. Give thanks for the past, for those who had vi-sion,  
 3. Give thanks for to-mor-row, full of sur-pris-es,  
 4. This gift we now bring, this present, this to-ken,

What words can con-vey it, the joy of this day?  
 who plant-ed and wa-tered so dreams could come true.  
 for know-ing what-ev-er to-mor-row may bring,  
 these words can con-vey it, the joy of this day!

When grate-ful we come, re-mem-bering, re-joic-ing,  
 Give thanks for the now, for stud-y, for wor-ship,  
 the Word is our prom-ise al-ways, for-ev-er;  
 When grate-ful we come, re-mem-bering, re-joic-ing,

what song can we of-fer in hon-or and praise?  
 for mis-sion that bids us turn prayer in-to deed.  
 we rest in God's keep-ing and live in God's love.  
 this song we now of-fer in hon-or and praise!

## On This Day Earth Shall Ring

1. On this day  
2. His the doom,  
3. God's bright star,  
4. On this day

earth shall ring with the song chil - dren sing  
ours the mirth; when he came down to earth,  
o'er his head, Wise Men three to him led;  
an - gels sing; with their song earth shall ring,

to the Lord, Christ our King, born on earth to  
Beth - le - hem saw his birth; ox and ass be -  
kneel they low by his bed, lay their gifts be -  
prais - ing Christ, heav - en's King, born on earth to

save us; him the Fa - ther gave us.  
 side him from the cold would hide him.  
 fore him, praise him and a - dore him.  
 save us; peace and love he gave us.

*Refrain*

\* Id - e - o - o - o, id - e - o - o - o,

id - e - o glo - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o!