Ready or not, here Christmas comes!

Very little about that first Christmas so long ago went according to plan. No one would have planned on taking a very pregnant young woman over 90 miles of rocky roads from Nazareth to Bethlehem. No one seems to have planned ahead for lodging. No one would have planned on inviting dirty, smelly, stranger shepherds to be the infant Jesus’ first visitors. Yet somehow, this unplanned series of accidents created the beginning of an unfolding series of miracles showing God’s love anew.

Now, this year, we’re once again dealing with an “unplanned” surge of COVID and a lot of people are making last minute changes to Christmas plans. But no matter what our plans are or how our plans change, Christmas will come, the Light will return no matter where we are or whom we’re with. And the miracles will be renewed once more.

Worship Services

Angel’s Christmas Eve (Family) service at 4 p.m. (In person only.)
Lessons and Carols (in person and livestreamed) at 7 p.m.

Bulleton for 7:00 p.m. Streaming Service

Fireside Christmas Eve (outside) at 10 p.m, in the courtyard.

We’ve created a poll to plan seating for our Christmas Eve Services during COVID-19 times. Please take a moment to let us know when you plan to attend so that we may plan a safe service for you.

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**Streaming Links**

CHRISTMAS EVE 7:00 P.M. STREAMING LINK

DECEMBER 26 10:00 A.M. STREAMING LINK

Virtual Coffee Hour after Worship on Zoom

Do you regularly enjoy chatting during the Streaming Link and/or visiting during Zoom Coffee Hour? Please consider volunteering to be a host. email Graham@uccmissoula.org for details.
Advent at UCC Missoula

Love came down at Christmas, 
love all lovely, Love divine; 
Love was born at Christmas; 
star and angels gave the sign. 
~Christina Rossetti

Christmas Eve and the Omicron variant

Well, golly. Last year, we’d hoped that by this time this year, the pandemic would be a receding memory as we “got back to normal” whatever that might mean. Sadly and suddenly, this is not the case as the Omicron variant of COVID-19 is now among us in Montana.

Large, indoor gatherings, such as Christmas Eve worship services, can create a higher risk environment for people to pass or become infected by the Omicron variant, which can be contagious even among those who’ve been vaccinated against COVID-19. To limit the risks of transmitting Omicron on Christmas Eve, UCC Missoula is asking your help to carry out the following practices if you plan to worship with us in person:

1. Get vaxxed and stay home if ill. Make certain that you and your friends/family are vaccinated, with booster shots on board, and symptom-free of any cold, flu or COVID symptoms. If anyone in your household has any kind of symptoms, or if you do not know vaccination status, we encourage you to join us for our livestreamed Lessons and Carols service at 7 p.m.! (And we hope anyone who is ill feels better soon!)

2. Wear a well-fitting mask. Please put on your mask before entering the building.

3. Give online or give early. We won’t pass a plate for the offering, but we will happily accept offerings in person at the back of the Sanctuary, online at www.uccmissoula.org/giving or by mail at 405 University Ave, 59801. Your offerings will support the Missoula Food Bank and Community Center, The Christmas Fund serving retired clergy, and our Special Needs fund assisting church members facing hardships.
4. Space your seating. We’re seating no more than four adults per pew in the Sanctuary, six people (including children) total. We’ll have spaced seating available in the narthex and Fireside room. If you see groups larger than 4-6 in a pew, please help them find more appropriate seating. Seating will be limited. Once our seating capacity is reached, late arrivals will be encouraged to return for the 10 p.m. outdoor service or join us for online worship.

5. Hum along. We encourage you to listen to the music led by our masked choir and only hum or sing very quietly into your masks for our Christmas carols.

6. Hands to yourselves. Please refrain from hugs, handshakes, or direct contact with others. (We know, this makes us feel sad, too!)

7. Say goodbye outside. The 7 p.m. service will end with us singing Silent Night and holding candles OUTSIDE. After you blow out the candles and return them to the ushers, please do not re-enter the building.

8. Please be extra kind to the ushers, worship leaders, choir members and staff who are working very hard to create a safe and sacred experience for everyone.

Thank you to everyone who plans to join us for worship. Our COVID-19 Advisory Team will be on top of new information as it becomes available and will make further recommendations as changes warrant. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy, New Year!

December 26 Sunday Worship

This is a very special Sunday worship experience led by Rabbi Mark Kula and incorporating song and prayer from the Jewish New Year traditions that release us from the past year and look ahead to the future. Please join us online or in person at 10 a.m.

Download Worship Bulletin.

Online Giving/End of Year Giving
Visit our Online Giving Page to support UCC Missoula and our ministries, or Text (406) 998-1900.

Online giving now allows you to pay transaction fees. Please consider paying the fees as a way to increase resources to our ministries.

**End of Year Giving** You are always welcome to make financial gifts to UCC Missoula and you can make those gifts to remember or honor a loved one at any time. Please let us know if you’d like to have us publish gifts “in the name of” whomever you’d like to honor. Gifts will be directed to our operating fund unless designated otherwise.

**A Message from Janice Springer**

Hello UCC folks!

I am thinking of you in this beautiful season, wishing I could be with you. I hope to worship with you on-line on Christmas Eve.

Sue and I are well, and enjoying these holy days. I wish all of you a very merry Christmas and many blessings in the new year.

And of course, I hope to see you in person next summer!

love,
Janice Springer

**Youth Ministries Pizza**

Thank you, High School students, for feedback on the best times to meet. Sunday late afternoon is it!! Mark your calendar for January 9, 2022, at 5:00 pm. Please join me at Bridge Pizza next to South Gate Mall, 3000 Brooks St. Start 2022 with a Pizza Treat and Building bridges as we get to know each other. Rabbi Mark is looking forward to spending time together. Bring a friend for engaging conversation, good humor, and a fun time. RSVP’ing is appreciated. [Mark@UCCmissoula.org](mailto:Mark@UCCmissoula.org)

**After Christmas at UCC Missoula**
Here is a peek at upcoming programs at UCC! (All dates for in-person activities subject to community health conditions.)

**Starting January 9, “Talk Back” returns!** Join Pastor Jennifer or Rabbi Mark after worship in the Bay Window room to talk about what you heard in worship. Ask follow-up questions, tell us what hit, or missed, and how the Holy is moving in your life. Drop in whenever you like. We'll set up a Zoom link for those who'd like to “Talk Back” online.

**“Words and Music: Hebrew Words within Psalms”**: Rabbi Mark and Pastor Jennifer will offer this weekly word study to help deepen our understanding of Hebrew culture and vocabulary found within psalms. This class will start on Tuesday, January 18 and run from 12:15 to 1:15 for four weeks. A separate YouTube short summary will be posted each week. [Register here!]

**Worship Series**: “The Prophets and the Papers” begins January 9. We'll look at how the prophets of the First Testament, and Jesus in the Second Testament, speak to current issues including—income inequality, climate justice, loneliness and other issues receiving coverage in the newsfeeds of our day.

**New Small Groups are forming soon**. Watch this space for opportunities to lead or learn about intersections between faith, spirituality, justice, and everyday life.

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**Gratitude Journal**

For hangers of lights, bearers of baskets, singers of songs, and movers of furniture, we offer huge thanks for all the ways you’ve made this season lovely.