

Congregational Church United Church of Christ



"I Am With You" by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Fourth Sunday of Advent Music Sunday

December 21, 2025

OUR PURPOSE

Love God • Love Each Other • Be God's Love in the World

Danville Congregational Church acknowledges that the land this house of worship sits upon is the traditional, unceded land of the Ohlone and Bay Miwok people. We offer this land acknowledgment as a sign of respect, with the knowledge that this land was sacred before we ever arrived.

At Danville Congregational Church, we welcome you to a progressive spiritual community that is open and affirming, celebrates differences, and encourages alternate views. We explore the Bible with curiosity and enthusiasm, taking it seriously but not literally. Taking Christ's call passionately to love our neighbor, we extend our faith into action for the betterment of all. Wherever you are on life's journey, we offer you a place of peace and hope.

Danville Congregational Church is an Open and Affirming church, welcoming all of God's people—of diverse race, gender, sexual orientation, family status, economic condition, and physical, mental, and emotional ability.

A NOTE TO WORSHIPERS

Please take note of the emergency exits around you and locate the nearest one to you.

At DCC, wearing a mask during worship or inside the building is optional; please do whatever is comfortable for you. Please be aware of others' personal space and space yourselves out in the sanctuary accordingly. Please invite consent before shaking hands and hugging. The left-hand section of pews as you enter the sanctuary has been designated for those who are free of scents and perfumes.

Please silence your cell phone when you enter the sanctuary.

If you would like to use one of our listening assistance devices, please see the sound technician in the back of the sanctuary.

First-time visitor? Welcome to Danville Congregational Church! We are glad you are here with us today. Please register your attendance in the Blue Pew Book located in the pew and share whatever information you would like us to have about you. If you are interested in learning more about DCC, please see one of the pastors after worship in the narthex (lobby) or contact Joyce Klassen (joyce.klassen@comcast.net) our Community Life Commissioner. We look forward to meeting you!

The DCC sanctuary is available for meditation and quiet prayer during the week during normal business hours.

Please feel free to come by any time—enter through the office.

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD



Liturgy by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

PRELUDE

Of the Father's Love Begotten

arr. Mark Hayes

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Bette Felton

WELCOME

Rev. Lauren Jewett

Please sign the sheet in the blue pad, pass it to another, and place it in the offering plate.

To offer a special prayer, please fill out a Prayer Card, which will be collected during Prayer Time.

LIGHTING THE CANDLE OF LOVE

Ron and Linda Elsdon

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Carol Gilliland

 st All are invited to rise in body, mind, or spirit.

One: Here in worship—

All: we pray together,

One: we rise together,

All: we sing together,

One: we listen together.

All: Here in worship—we are not alone.

One: So when life gives you reason to grieve, to fear, or to worry,

remember this moment.

All: We are not alone.

One: Let us worship our with-us God.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Carol

One: Peace be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Let us greet one another and pass the peace of Christ

*OPENING HYMN

Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant

See next page.

Richard Gillard, 1977; alt.

Rom. 12:9-18; Col. 1:24-29



1 & 6 Won't you let me be your ser-vant, let me be as Christ to you?

- 2 We are pil-grims on a jour-ney, we are trav-elers on the road;
- 3 I will hold the Christ-light for you in the shad-ow of your fear;
- 4 I will weep when you are weep-ing; when you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
- 5 When we sing to God in heav-en we shall find such har mo ny,





Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my ser-vant, too. We are here to help each oth - er go the mile and bear the load. will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear. will share your joy and sor-row till we've seen this jour-ney through. Born of all we've known to - geth-er of Christ's love and ag - o - ny.



Richard Gillard was born in England and later made his home in New Zealand. Largely self-taught, Gillard has described his musical style as "folk." This is the best known of his many songs in the United States.

Tune: SERVANT SONG 8.7.8.7. Richard Gillard, 1977 Arr. Betty Carr Pulkingham, 1977; adapt. TIME WITH CHILDREN Pastor Lauren

Following the Time With Children, children are invited to meet their teachers in the back of the sanctuary for Godly Play.

SCRIPTURE LESSON Isaiah 41:5-10 Bette

The coastlands have seen and are afraid; the ends of the earth tremble; they have drawn near and come. Each one helps the other, saying to one another, "Take courage!" The artisan encourages the goldsmith, and the one who smooths with the hammer encourages the one who strikes the anvil, saying of the soldering, "It is good," and they fasten it with nails so that it cannot be moved. But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant; I have chosen you and not cast you off";

do not fear, for I am with you;

do not be afraid, for I am your God;

I will strengthen you; I will help you;

I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

HOMILY When You're Afraid, Give Me Your Hand Rev. Todd Atkins-Whitley

MUSIC SUNDAY PROGRAM John Rutter's Christmas Carols

Shepherd's Pipe Carol

Going through the hills on a night all starry On the way to Bethlehem Far away I heard a shepherd boy piping On the way to Bethlehem

Chorus:

Angels in the sky brought this message nigh:
"Dance and sing for joy that Christ the newborn King
Is come to bring us peace on earth
And He's lying cradled there at Bethlehem."

"Tell me, shepherd boy piping tunes so merrily On the way to Bethlehem Who will hear your tunes on these hills so lonely On the way to Bethlehem? (Chorus)

"None may hear my pipes on these hills so lonely On the way to Bethlehem; But a King will hear me play sweet lullabies When I get to Bethlehem."

Angels in the sky came down from on high Hovered o'er the manger where the babe was lying Cradled in the arms of his mother Mary Sleeping now at Bethlehem

"Where is the new King, shepherd boy piping merrily Is He there at Bethlehem?"
"I will find Him soon by the star shining brightly In the sky o'er Bethlehem." (Chorus)

"May I come with you, shepherd boy piping merrily Come with you to Bethlehem? Pay my homage too at the new King's cradle Is it far to Bethlehem?"

Angels in the sky brought this message nigh:
"Dance and sing for joy that Christ the newborn King
Is born in the stable yonder,
born for you and me."

Nativity Carol

Born in a stable so bare, born so long ago Born 'neath light of star, He who loved us so

Chorus:

Far away, silent he lay, born today, your homage pay For Christ is born for aye, born on Christmas Day

Cradled by mother so fair, tender her lullaby Over her son so dear, angel hosts fill the sky (Chorus)

Wise men from distant far land, sheperds from starry hills Worship this babe so rare, hearts with his warmth he fills (Chorus)

Love in that stable was born, into our hearts to flow Innocent dreaming babe, make me thy love to know (Chorus)

Angels' Carol

Have you heard the sound of the angel voices Ringing out so sweetly, ringing out so clear? Have you seen the star shining out so brightly As a sign from God that Christ the Lord is here?

Have you heard the news that they bring from heaven To the humble shepherds who have waited long? Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo! Hear the angels sing their joyful song

He is come in peace in the winter's stillness Like a gentle snowfall in the gentle night He is come in joy, like the sun at morning Filling all the world with radiance and with light

He's come in love as the child of Mary In a simple stable, we have seen his birth Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo! Hear the angels singing 'Peace on earth'

He will bring new light to a world in darkness Like a bright star shining in the skies above He will bring new hope to the waiting nations When he comes to reign in purity and love

Let the earth rejoice at the Saviour's coming Let the heavens answer with a joyful morn Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo! Hear the angels singing, "Christ is born"

I Wonder As I Wander

I wonder as I wander, out under the sky How Jesus the Savior did come forth to die For poor on'ry people like you and like I I wonder as I wander, out under the sky

When Mary birthed Jesus, 'twas in a cow's stall With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all But high from God's Heaven, a star's light did fall And the promise of ages it then did recall

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing
A star in the sky, or a bird on the wing
Or all of God's Angels in heav'n to sing
He surely could have had it, 'cause he was the King

Star Carol

Sing this night (for a boy is born in Bethlehem)
Christ our Lord (in a lowly manger lies)
Bring your gifts (come and worship at his cradle)
Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary

Chorus:

See his star shining bright In the sky this Christmas night Follow me joyfully Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary

Angels bright (come from heaven's highest glory)
Bear the news (with its message of good cheer)
Sing, rejoice (for a King is come to save us)
Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary (Chorus)

See, he lies in his mother's tender keeping Jesus Christ in her loving arms asleep Shepherds poor, come to worship and adore him Offer their humble gifts before the son of Mary (Chorus)

Let us pay our homage at the manger Sing his praise on this joyful Christmas Night Christ is come, bringing promises of salvation Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary (Chorus) TIME OF PRAYER

Pastor Todd

Sharing our Joys and Concerns

All: Hear our prayer

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Our Loving God, who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

TIME OF GIVING Bette

Invitation to Giving

For those of you who have already made a gift by check or automated giving, we are grateful. If you would like to make a gift toward the Christmas offering, please place it in the offering plate or <u>give using our web site</u> or donate using your mobile device, text the word give to 855-940-3756.

Offertory

O Little Town of Bethlehem

arr. Penny Rodriguez

*Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below; Praise God above, ye heavenly host; Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen

*Offertory Prayer

WORK OF THE PEOPLE

Pastor Todd

*CLOSING HYMN

We're Not Alone

See next page.

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH & BENEDICTION

Pastor Todd and Congregation

All: We will reach for each other. We will look for God in our midst. We will sing songs of joy. We will proclaim: *Unto us, love is born.*

POSTLUDE

Fantasia on 'Greensleeves' Ralph Vaughan Williams

Mozart to Mendelssohn Chamber Orchestra

Please remain in your pews until the light has been taken out of the Sanctuary. Thank you!

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We're Not Alone

ADESTE FIDELES Irr. with refrain

Words by Anna Strickland, 2025

Music by John Francis Wade, 1751



DCC Chancel Choir

Soprano

Heidi Bridgeman Karen Cilman Jen Faught

Gabrielle Goozée-Nichols

Nicole Noga Nancy Snyder Alto

Wendy Fitch Janis Jang Karol Mead Leandra Ramm Alene Riley

Tenor

Miguel Atkins-Whitley Edward Betts Martin Gates Sandra Lepley

Ina Nierotka

Bass

James W. Cook Dan Northway Chris Poston Bill Williams

Second Violin

Rachel Forisha Celia Cheung

Alicia Guo

Fanny Zhu

Mozart to Mendelssohn Chamber Orchestra

First Violin

Michael Long Jordan Tsai Nalini Rao Kimberley Mitchell

Viola

Katherine Feller Rebecca Gertmenian Iolanthe Stronger Marjolein Shiamatey

Cello

Roland Feller Sue Yeon Choi Erika Reed Anne Szabla

Contrabass

Jay Soule

Flute

Gabriela Benuto

Sha Jin

Bassoon

Jason Gibbs

Harp

Oboe

Tim Meals

Clarinet

Ritchie Iu

Inga Soule

Lucinda Belle

Horn

John DeGiglio Lois Feller Percussion

Anne Szabla

WORSHIP NOTES

"I Am With You" by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Isaiah 41:5-10 | 11"x14" Hand-carved block printed with oil-based ink on paper

Here we find the Israelites far from home, living in Babylonian exile. Fear and uncertainty hang heavy with the looming threat of Persian invasion.

"The coastlands have seen and are afraid, the ends of the earth tremble" (Isaiah 45:5). As some scramble to find courage in idols, God calls those exiled from Judah to be heartened by their rootedness in God's story. The image that formed in my mind was a community nestled in God's hands amid the Mediterranean coastlands—the same lands conquered by the Babylonians, and to which the exiles longed to return.

While I was creating this image, the U.S. President shared an AI-generated video of his "vision" for Gaza, those same coastlands referenced in Isaiah. I was shaken by the contrast between his imagined future and the reality of U.S.-funded devastation. The video transformed rubble and the bone-chilling cries of mothers into panning vistas of high-rise beachfront resorts and casinos, rebranding Gaza as the "Riviera of the Middle East."

This bombastic vision mocks a people clinging to threads of existence. Watching the powerful revel in the demise of the vulnerable is horrifying—but fitting. In Isaiah, God's people are exiled under the thumb of a world power. Fearful artisans solder golden idols, hoping for security. But God is not found in the hands of the powerful or the shine of idols. God is present amid the rubble, comforting the forsaken and reminding them of their place in God's story. No matter which empire holds sway, God sides with the subjugated and disenfranchised. Despite the fear that causes the very earth to tremble, God accompanies the downtrodden, upholding them with a steady hand.

From my study of this passage and shock at the video, a counter-vision of hope emerged. Coastal Mediterranean plants—bougainvillea for peace, lantana for liveliness, and red valerian for strength— anchor the shifting sand. God's hands cradle the community like a fragile flame as their light resiliently radiates. The twelve figures in simplified Palestinian garb represent the exiled Judeans in Isaiah, the Palestinians in modern day Gaza, and all crushed by empire—each cherished by a faithful God. The hands in the image could also be ours.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

(B)

Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman (she/her) is an artist, graphic designer, and theologian. She uses paint, metallic inks, linoleum carving tools, and her trusty Apple pencil to image the layered complexity she experiences in scripture texts. Visual exploration offers her a holy space to ask questions, find her voice, take risks, and make bold statements.



English composer **John Rutter** became extremely popular in the 1970s and 80s for his beautiful and charming Christmas carols, and other liturgical music (a Requiem, settings of the Gloria and Magnificat, and more). He is also renowned as choral conductor, particularly for his work with the Cambridge Singers and their many incredible recordings. Rutter just turned 80 this year, and was also knighted! To celebrate his long career and achievements, we're presenting five of his beloved carols, with their original chamber orchestra accompaniments (which are

not often performed, since most churches don't have access to, or can afford to hire, an orchestra)!

Twenty-five musicians from John Kendall Bailey's Mozart to Mendelssohn orchestra have journeyed over from San Francisco to play, and members of the Chora Nova chorus in Berkeley that he also directs are singing—along with some of our usual favorite professional guest singers alongside our dedicated Chancel Choir.

As an added treat, the orchestra will also play Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on 'Greensleeves'* (the tune we know as *What Child Is This*); it was Vaughan Williams who found this English folk tune and made it famous with this arrangement of it.

TODAY'S SCHEDULE

8:30am–9:15am Choir Rehearsal

9:30am-10:30am Worship (In-person and Zoom)

10:30am-11:00am Time of Fellowship in Koinonia / breakout room

Our unattended nursery is open for anyone who would like to make use of it during worship. For safety reasons, we request that no child be left on the playground without appropriate supervision.

Godly Play (for children ages preschool through 5th grade) is offered immediately following the Opening Hymn. All children are invited to participate in Godly Play.

THIS WEEK AT DCC

Wednesday 10:00am Wednesday Morning Prayer

Wednesday 5:00pm-6:30pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

TODAY'S EMMAUS TEAM

Today's Emmaus Team is Team 3.

Candlelighters: Linda Elsdon and Ron Elsdon

Greeters Linda Elsdon and Bobbi Stewart

Ushers: Ron Elsdon, Carol Gilliland, Bob Kovach, and Judy Schreib

Liturgists: Linda Elsdon, Ron Elsdon, Bette Felton, and Carol Gilliland

Fellowship Hosts: Janis Jang, Randy Jang, and Trish Moosbrugger

Sound Tech: Randy Jang

Tech Ministers: John Klassen

Lock Up Duty: Tom Sonnemann

Children's Ministers

Godly Play: Trish Moosbrugger

Next Week's Emmaus Team is Team 5.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Note: Announcements for next week are due by 9:00am on Monday, December 22nd.

The Church office will be closed starting December 24 and remained closed the week between Christmas and New Years Day. We will resume regular office hours on Monday, January 5th. Reach out to Pastor Todd directly if you have a pastoral need.



Come Join Godly Play this Sunday!

Join storyteller Trish in Godly Play this Sunday as we continue our journey to Bethlehem with the prophets, the Holy Family, the shepherds, the Magi and all the rest. All children are welcome as we prepare our hearts for Christmas.

No Men's Coffee and Donuts on December 23rd

The Men's Group will not be meeting for Coffee and Donuts on Tuesday, December 23rd due to Christmas week.

Sunday, January 4th at noon Monthly Lunch Bunch—Please Join Us!

Would you like to get to know some of your DCC colleagues better? Come join us for lunch after church on Sunday, December 7th. We'll be gathering at noon (or whenever you get there) at **Clementine's** in San Ramon and would love for you to join us! If you have joined us before, please come again! If you haven't been able to make it before, please join us. Note: Please come prepared to pay for your meal with check, cash, Paypal or Venmo. Thanks! Please RSVP to Wilson Jackson at 925-819-0222 or email him at wrjachev@netzero.com to let him know you'll be attending.



Wednesday Morning Prayer

Pastor Todd facilitates morning prayer on Wednesdays at 10:00am via Zoom and in the Sanctuary. We will engage in centering prayer and then pray for those requests we have received. To join via Zoom use this link.

Christmas Offering

Our Joy at Christmas is a response to God's promise of new life through the birth of Jesus. It is a joy we are called on to share widely, as we can do through our Christmas offering. This year, the Outreach Commission has designated two recipients: **Family Justice Center and the United Church of Christ's Christmas Fund**. Each will receive one half of our Christmas offering, collected today and on Christmas Eve.



For over 10 years, **The Family Justice Center** is a warm and welcoming one-stop center for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse and human trafficking. We

provide a place where families come first. Our staff bring resources to meet the needs of children, youth and families impacted by interpersonal violence, recognizing that family violence greatly impacts children's healthy development including their emotional, mental and physical health. The Family Justice Center also provides counseling services, free 1 hour lawyer consultations (family law & immigration), restraining order assistance, yoga, and much more! To find out more about our programs click here! When survivors of interpersonal violence seek help, they are often frustrated by a fractured system. They may have to travel to multiple locations and tell their stories repeatedly. National estimates show that victims may have to access as many as 32 different agencies for assistance. These hurdles can discourage their efforts and cause many people to simply stop seeking help. The Center brings public and private partners together under one roof to provide wrap-around services. For families seeking services, coming to one location is faster, more immediately helpful, and far less expensive than traveling to multiple locations throughout the county. Victims no longer need to tell their story multiple times, papers are filed right away and cases are completed more quickly, with the ultimate result that families can be safer sooner.



The <u>UCC Christmas Fund</u> has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. Through our Christmas offering, we can participate in God's promise of renewal to the growing number of retirees whose low-income annuities make it

difficult to meet increasing living costs. Think of the ways in which your life has been touched by a former pastor, a retired Sunday School teacher, a church secretary, a minister of music, and honor their ministries with a gift that will help others in times of need.

Please join us in sharing this joy by giving to those in need through our Christmas offering on or after Sunday, December 21. Please use a Christmas Offering envelope or write "Christmas offering" in the memo line of your check made out to DCC. To make your offering online, go to the DCC Donations page and select Christmas Offering, or text give to 855-940-3756 and select Christmas offering.

Faithfully, Chris Sonnemann, Outreach Commissioner



Advent Flowers

Future Homes for Poinsettias

Today we invite the Deacons to take a poinsettia to our homebound friends. On Christmas Eve, those who donated Advent flowers, can take one home after the service. When our donors are finished selecting their poinsettias, members of the congregation are welcomed to take a festive flower plant home with them.

Poinsettia Acknowledgments

Worship Commission would like to thank the Men's Group, Carol Bassett, and the Jangs for caring for the poinsettias during the Advent season. A special thanks to Larry Berlin for donating the extralarge poinsettia that has been our accent piece this whole season. Advent flowers have been donated by the following:

Donor Name	In Memory Of	In Honor Of
Alene Riley		Her Family
Steve & Heidi Bridgeman	Richard & Betty Brown, Derek Brown and	
	Orval & Helen Bridgeman	
Eileen Ackley	Doug Krutilek	
Sally Baca	Danny Baca & Valerie Baca	
Nan Karns	Dick Karns	
Nancy & Wayne Snyder	Our Parents	
Barbara DeBarger	Betty DeBarger and Keith & Toshiko Gestring	
Bette Felton	Lee & Jeanne Felton	
Michiyo Laing	Carl Laing	
Nancy Halseth	Dave Halseth, Tom & Mary Lou Michael	
Sharon Brockman		Diana Lamb
Nicole Noga & Dan Northway		Our Familes
Sereen & Tahir Mahmood	Our Parents	
The Seiler Family	Rod & Marilyn Seiler and	
	Connie & Alan Wadsworth	

Pastoral Availability

Pastor Todd keeps regular office hours remotely on Monday and in the office Tuesday through Thursday. If you would like to meet with Pastor Todd, please reach out to him directly via phone or email.

Pastor Lauren is available by appointment. You can reach her via email or phone.



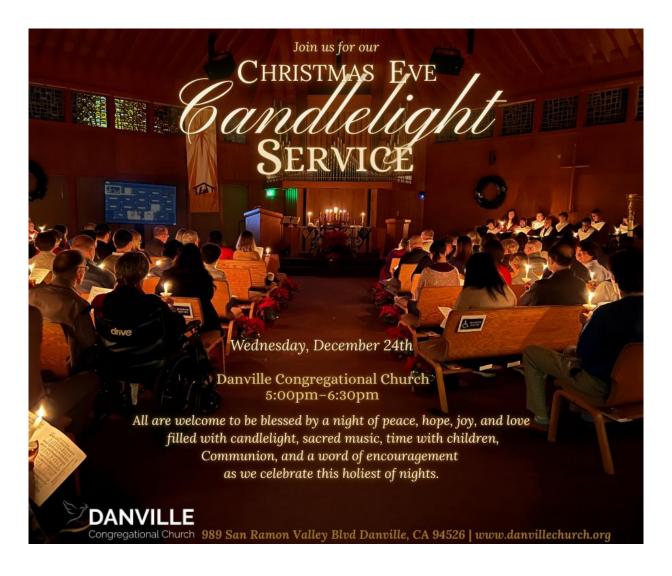


Pictures of the Week



DCC's Intergenerational Pageant was a big success and we had an incredible turnout at the Cookie Exchange and Luncheon.

If you'd like to submit a picture to be considered for the pic of the week, email anne-marie@danvillechurch.org.



Ministers—The Entire Congregation

Church Staff

The Rev. Todd Atkins-Whitley, Senior Pastor
The Rev. Lauren Jewett, Minister of Youth & Community Engagement
John Kendall Bailey, Music Director
Anne-Marie Vanniasinkam, Office & Communications Manager

The **DCC Prayer Team** prays daily for those in need of prayers. If you would like to submit a prayer request for yourself or someone else, contact a pastor or send an email to **prayers@danvillechurch.org**. All requests are kept confidential unless specified otherwise.

Maria Arroyo, Dayspring Preschool Director Stacey Perez, Administrative Assistant www.dayspringpreschool.org



Danville Congregational Church

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