



8:45 a.m. + December 28, 2025 + 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 angels, as he inherited a more excellent Name than they. For to which of the angels 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 angels of God prostrate before Him." And to the angels, indeed, He says, "Who makes His angels 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 2025. 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 do you need to release and surrender to God?

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 Consecration

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.

Holy Communion

Silence for Reflecting on What Will Be

- With what kind of inner stance would you like to move into 2026? What do you desire for your inner life?
- As best you can discern, what is yours to do in 2026? 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

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
Christian Ibanez – AV Production
Peter Johns – Associate Director of Contemplative Worship

Zachary Montasser – Violinist
Nick Cavazos – AV Production
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.

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.

Upcoming Offerings

January 9-11, "Anchored in The Center" 25th Anniversary Weekend

- Friday, Jan 9th 6:30 – 8:00pm
Conversation and Q&A with Rev. Dr. Michael Sciretti, Jr. & Jerry Webber (via zoom)
- Saturday, Jan 10th 9:00am – 2:00pm
Guided Silent Retreat with Rev. Dr. Michael Sciretti, Jr. \$35
- Sunday, Jan 11th 8:45 am Worship and 10:00am Worship Response
Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Contemplative Worship Service



February 20-21 – Enneagram Workshops with Sandra Smith

- Friday, February 20 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Advanced Workshop \$25
- Saturday, February 21 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Introductory Workshop \$25

The School for Contemplative Living

Spring Courses 2026

The Spring Courses and their registrations are all now open. Visit the table in the foyer to grab a copy of our Course Catalog or visit the landing page on our website.



Giving to The Center

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.

