

“CANTATA”
Sung by Chancel Choir
At FIRST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Belleville, IL
December 21, 2025
(transcribed from audio file)

Song #1 – O Come Emmanuel

Friends, hear these words from the prophet Isaiah.

The voice of one crying out in the wilderness. Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways will be made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

This was John the Baptist call in pointing to the coming Messiah, so it is our call today as we await Christ’s return. We strain our ears to hear the voice of one crying in the wilderness of our modern world. A wilderness of despair and discouragement, the wilderness of anger and fear, the wilderness of alienation and selfishness, the wilderness of poverty and helplessness. The voice cries to us to make ready the path for our God, to remove the obstacles and respond with acts of compassion, kindness and care and we seek to do this as God opens our hearts to respond in caring ways wherever we see need, but this is more than charity. We are called to reach out that the whole world will see and hear and know that through this baby born in a manger God has shown us the face of love, a love for all people everywhere.

Song #2 – God Rest Ye

Each year during Advent We are reminded of this truth. We love because God first loved us. At Christmastime we celebrate God’s love, birthed in a manger. God’s supreme gift to you and me and more importantly God’s supreme gift for all time. This baby was not out of this world, but God at work with us and in this world. Day by day God calls us into a deeper relationship and to deeper connections of love and care with one another, that together we might know the fullness of hope, peace, joy and love which God brings to us in this child.

Today we proclaim that Jesus is the greatest gift of all. Good people all this Christmastime consider well and bear in mind what our good God for us has done in sending his beloved son.

Song #3 – The Wexford Carol

The psalmist declares Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary. Praise him in his mighty firmament. Praise him for his mighty deeds. Praise him according to his surpassing greatness. Praise him with trumpet sound. Praise him with lute and harp. Praise him with tambourine and dance. Praise him with strings and pipe. Praise him with clanging symbols. Praise him with loud clashing symbols. Let everything that breathes, praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

It's been said that worship is bragging on God for who God is, and praise is thanking God for what God has done. Worship and praise. Let our worship reach out in awe and wonder to the God of all the universe and may our praise echo throughout eternity.

Song #4 – Mary's Little Boy Child

The promise of the scriptures and the good news of the gospel is that when we reach for God's hand, we find that God has been reaching for us all along.

Song #5 – Angels We Have Heard On High

Song #6 – A Christmas Blessing