Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World

Christmas Eve Service

December 24, 2020

Order of Service for the Worship of God

GOD CALLS US TO CELEBRATE “GOOD NEWS!”

PRELUDE
Mary, Did You Know
Stan Johnson offers this Christmas Eve Prelude on flutes

PASTORAL WELCOME
Pastor Brandon

RESPONSIVE READING
Joyce Smuda

ONE: Tonight old dreams die and new dreams come to life.
The Promise is fulfilled!

ALL: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace.

ONE: Hope gives way to joy and prayer to proclamation.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace.

ONE: Dawn invades midnight, The Light of the World has come.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace.

ONE: And this light is a light for all; igniting a flame within the soul, warming us from within, radiating love, lighting our lives with the presence of God, who has come alive in human flesh within us and among us, now and always.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace.

ONE: One light is the source of all light, and tonight we celebrate how we have come to know that light.

THE BIDDING PRAYER
Joyce Smuda

Beloved in Christ, be it this Christmastide our care and delight to hear again the message of the angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing, which is come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger.

Therefore, let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our creation unto the glorious Redemption brought us by this Holy Child.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace on earth and goodwill among all people; for unity and common good within the Church he came to build.

And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us remember, in his name, the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry, and the oppressed; the sick and them that mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and the little children; all those who know not his love, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.
Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore, and in a greater light, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom we are forever one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the Throne of Heaven, in the words which Christ taught us [Please, join me in the “The Lord’s Prayer”].

Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us. And, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

GOD’S ADVENT GIFTS LIGHT OUR WAY

Historically, the Church’s liturgical calendar has designated the four weeks prior to Christmas day as a time of solidarity with all who have waited and who are waiting for the presence and gifts of God fully to become realized for the healing of the world. This season of waiting is called “Advent,” which means “on the way,” and shows up in the English word “adventure.” Let us listen to the story of those who waited for and then those who welcomed the very presence of God - Emmanuel, “God with us”.

AN ADVENT WREATH LITANY – AWAITING GOD-WITH-US

WE WELCOME GOD’S GIFT OF HOPE
Isaiah 9. 2 – 7 The prophet announces the birth of a king to the people John Uhte

CAROL – UMH #196 “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

WE WELCOME GOD’S GIFT OF PEACE
Micah 5. 2 – 5a The prophet announces the birth of a king to the people Harold Tollerup

CAROL – UMH #218 “It Came upon the Midnight Clear (1, 3, 4)”

WE WELCOME GOD’S GIFT OF JOY
Luke 1. 26 - 38 Mary is blessed by God with an unexpected pregnancy Tillema Family

CAROL – UMH #238 “Angels We Have Heard on High (1. 3)”

WE WELCOME GOD’S GIFT OF LOVE
Matthew 1.18–21; Luke 2.1–5 Joseph gets a “wake-up” call from God Tillema Family

CAROL – UMH #230 “O Little Town of Bethlehem (1, 2, 4)”

WE WELCOME THE GIFT OF GOD’S PRESENCE WITH US
Luke 2. 6 - 20 Against a backdrop of emperors and taxes, Jesus is Born! Joshua Williams

SONG “O Holy Night” Rasa Washington-Olson, soloist

WE RESPOND TO GOD’S PRESENCE WITH US
Matthew 2. 1 - 11 Against a backdrop of emperors and taxes, Jesus is Born!

CAROL – UMH #245 “The First Noel” (1, 2, 5)

Offering - “Paul’s Place” Paul’s Place is a multi-functional housing center designed to serve the most vulnerable individuals living homeless in Davis by providing housing and wraparound services. Please give generously to help support our unhoused neighbors.

Please use this link to offer your gift electronically. https://onrealm.org/DavisUnitedMeth/give/specialoffering

OFFERTORY “Away in a Manger” w/ Brahms’ “Lullaby” Julia Butler, pianist

GOD SO LOVES THE WORLD – Lighting the Christ candle
John 1.1 –1 God’s vision for the world persists in times of chaos and crisis. Pastor Brandon

(As we sing, light your candle as God’s vision puts your faith to work in your corner of the world.)

CAROL - UMH #246 “Joy to the World”

WE SHARE GOOD NEWS OF GOD’S LOVE FOR A WORLD IN NEED

**BENEDICTION

“In this beautiful and often chaotic world, continually reveal the way of your Christ to us, O God. Let the star of your hope touch the hearts of all people with the bright beams of Your mercy and truth; and so direct our steps that we may ever walk in the way You revealed to us, as the shepherds of Bethlehem walked with joy to the manger where he dwelled and as the Magi of the Orient sought him out beneath the star, who now and ever reigns in our hearts, our brother, Jesus, the Christ. Amen.”

SONG OF BENEDICTION “Peace, Peace with Silent Night” Stan Johnson & Carol Grench, flutists

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Special thanks to our liturgists, readers, singers, musicians, candlelighters, sound technicians, sanctuary decorators, and to everyone who made possible and participated in tonight’s service!
We come to know you, Holy One, as Wisdom Incarnate, as Flickering Flame, as Spirit of Life, as Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love - Enfleshed. We come to you this Advent in need, with longing, in pain, captive to fear, desiring a more just world, a more livable life for all of us, for the earth, for every living thing caught and held in the web we call this one wild and precious Life. We long for you. We long for healing. We long for liberation. We long for Life Enhancing systems and patterns of relating.

And so, this Advent, we pause. We breathe. We pray. We dig deep. We reach out. We rise up. We remember. We vision. We sit with the pain. We stay with the trouble. We wait, expectant. We light candles. We labor. We open to You, and to one another, and to the Sacred Mystery that is Emmanuel, God-With-Us, Love Incarnate, Divinity - Enfleshed.

Advent 1 - Hope

The Hope of God-With-Us does not come as guaranteed outcome, or predetermined plan, or promise of a happy ending. Hope is gestating in darkness; it comes unexpectedly. Hope invites our expectation and demands our participation. We light the first candle and prepare the way for hope with courage.

Advent 2 - Peace

The Peace of God-With-Us does not come as law and order, or enforcement and control. Peace cannot be commanded; it can only be offered. Peace is gestating in darkness; it comes unexpectedly. The Peace of God-With-Us is collective, liberating us from deadly complicity. We light the second candle and prepare the way for peace with justice.

Advent 3 - Joy

The Joy of God-With-Us does not come as naïve optimism, or surface-level feel-good-ness. The Joy of God-With-Us is mingled with grief, exists side-by-side with mourning, knows that pain and death are all too real, but do not have the final word. This joy tends tenderly to beauty, and softness, and the gladness that comes from paying attention to what matters. The Joy of God-With-Us is collective, liberating us from deadly despair. Joy is gestating in darkness; it comes unexpectedly. We light the third candle and prepare the way for joy with sorrow.

Advent 4 – Love

The Love of God-With-Us does not come as mere feeling, or sentimental fluff. Love is our greatest commandment—tending tenderly to God, to other, and to self. The Love of God-With-Us is love in action, radical love practices: redistribution of resources and risks, solidarity with those most exposed to threat, hospitality to caravans, refugees, migrants, and sojourners, caring for those we’ve been taught to despise, or fear. This love is fierce, and tender. It defies unjust rules and flattens hierarchies of value. The Love of God-With-Us is collective, liberating us from deadly alienation. Love is gestating in darkness; it comes unexpectedly. We light the fourth candle and prepare the way, for Love - enfleshed. May Love be birthed among, within, and through us, this night and always.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel...
For a child has been born—for us!
   the gift of a son—for us!
He'll take over
   the running of the world.
His names will be: Amazing Counselor,
   Strong God,
Eternal Father,
   Prince of Wholeness.
His ruling authority will grow,
   and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings.
He'll rule from the historic David throne
   over that promised kingdom.
He'll put that kingdom on a firm footing
   and keep it going
With fair dealing and right living,
   beginning now and lasting always.
The zeal of God-of-the-Angel-Armies
   will do all this.
But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to rule in Israel,  
whose origin is from of old,  
from ancient days.  
Therefore he shall give them up until the time  
when she who is in labor has brought forth;  
then the rest of his kindred shall return  
to the people of Israel.  
And he shall stand and feed his flock  
in the strength of the Lord,  
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.  
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great  
to the ends of the earth;  
and he shall be the one of peace.
In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth to me; I was engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph; my name is Mary. Upon entering, Gabriel spoke to me saying: “Good morning! You’re beautiful with God’s beauty, Beautiful inside and out! God be with you.”

I was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured me, saying,

“Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus.

He will be great, be called ‘Son of the Highest.’ The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; He will rule Jacob’s house forever— no end, ever, to his kingdom.”

I said to the angel,

“But how? I’ve never been with a man.”

Gabriel answered me,

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest hover over you; Therefore, the child you bring to birth will be called Holy, Son of God.”

“And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months pregnant! Nothing, you see, is impossible with God.”

And I replied,

“Yes, I see it all now:
I’m the Lord’s maid, ready to serve.
Let it be with me just as you say”.

Then the angel left me.
This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to me, but before we were together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because I trusted God in all things, and as her husband to be, I did not want to expose her to public disgrace and considered that I should divorce her quietly.

But later, an angel of the Lord appeared to me in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

When I woke up, I did what the angel of the Lord had commanded me; I took Mary home as my wife.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

So I also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of my ancestor David, because I belonged to the house and lineage of David. I went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be my wife; she was expecting a child.
While Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

We, shepherds, were living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over our flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to us, and the glory of the Lord shone around us, and we were terrified. But the angel said to us,

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to all on whom God’s favor rests."

When the angels had left us and gone into heaven, we shepherds said to one another,

"Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So we hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When we had seen him, we spread the word concerning what we had been told about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what we shepherds said to them.

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. And we returned to our work in the fields, glorifying and praising God for all the things we had heard and seen, just as we had been told.
WE RESPOND TO GOD’S PRESENCE WITH US (Magi) - Wise Family
Matthew 2. 1 – 11
The magi follow a star to find the child Jesus

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the
time of King Herod, we, the Magi from the east, came to
city of Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has
been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east
and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and
all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all
the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he
asked them where the Christ was to be born.

"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what
the prophet has written: " 'But you, Bethlehem, in the
land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers
of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be
the shepherd of my people Israel.'"

Then Herod called us to meet with him secretly and
we told him the exact time the star had appeared. He
sent us to Bethlehem and said,

"Go and make a careful search for the child. As
soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may
go and worship him."

After we had heard the king, we went on our way, and
the star we had seen in the eastern sky went ahead of us
until it stopped over the place where the child was.

When we saw the star, we were overjoyed. On
coming to the house, we saw the child with his mother
Mary, and we bowed down and worshiped him. Then we
opened our treasures and presented him with gifts of
gold and of incense and of myrrh.
The Word was first,  
the Word present to God,  
    God present to the Word.  
The Word was God,  
in readiness for God from day one.  
Everything was created through him;  
   nothing—not one thing!—  
came into being without him.  
What came into existence was Life,  
   and the Life was Light to live by.  
The Life-Light blazed out of the chaos;  
   the chaos couldn’t destroy it.  

There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to  
point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show  
everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was  
not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to  
the Light.

The Life-Light was the real thing:  
   Every person entering Life  
   he brings into Light.  
He was in the world,  
    the world was there through him,  
    and yet the world didn’t even notice.  
He came to his own people,  
   but they didn’t want him.  
But whoever did want him,  
   who believed he was who he claimed  
   and would do what he said,  
He made to be their true selves,  
   their child-of-God selves.  
These are the God-begotten,  
   not blood-begotten,  
   not flesh-begotten,  
   not sex-begotten.  
The Word became flesh and blood,  
   and moved into the neighborhood.  
We saw the glory with our own eyes,  
   the one-of-a-kind glory,  
   like Father, like Son,  
Generous inside and out,  
   true from start to finish.