

**Christmas Eve Service
December 24, 2018 (10 pm)
“Silent Night, Joyful Night”
Version 2.0**

Prelude – includes musical offering “Bring a Torch Isabella” – piano duet (Alex Ritter + David Worth)

Poetry: “Star-Giving” by Ann Weems CHRIS

What I'd really like to give you for Christmas
is a star ...
Brilliance in a package,
something you could keep in the pocket of your jeans
or in the pocket of your being.
Something to take out in times of darkness,
something that would never snuff out nor tarnish,
something you could hold in your hand,
something for wonderment,
something for pondering,
something that would remind you of
what Christmas has always meant:
God's Advent Light into the darkness of this world.
But stars are only God's for giving,
and I must be content to give you words and wishes and
packages without stars.
But I can wish you life
as radiant as the Star
that announced the Christ Child's coming,
and as filled with awe as the shepherds who stood
beneath its light.
And I can pass on to you the love
that has been given to me,
ignited countless times by others
who have knelt in Bethlehem's light.
Perhaps, if you ask, God will give you a star.

Carol: “O Come All Ye Faithful”

Advent Candle Lighting Carol will be sung while candles are lit.

Carol: “Hark the Herald Angels Sing”

Welcome/Prayer

Listen to a story, a wonderful story of hope and promise and joy, one which has been told and retold in hundreds of different ways. The first telling of the story is

in the Bible: a story of a simple family and a holy night; of ordinary shepherds and glorious angels; a story of a newborn child. This is the Christmas story, a story which began long ago when the prophets promised that one day God would send a messiah.

I. PROMISE

Scripture: Selections from the Book of Isaiah - CHRIS

For the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Then a shoot shall grow from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall spring from his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Then the wolf shall live with the sheep, and the leopard lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall grow up together, and a little child shall lead them; the cow and the bear shall be friends, and their young shall lie down together. The lion shall eat straw like cattle; the infant shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the young child dance over the viper's nest.

They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for as the waters fill the sea, so shall the land be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

Poetry: "To Listen, To Look" by Ann Weems - ERIC

Is it all sewn up – my life?
Is it at this point so predictable,
 so orderly,
 so neat,
 so arranged,
 so right,
 that I don't have time or space
 for listening for the rustle of angels' wings
 or running to stables to see a baby?
Could this be what he meant when he said
 Listen, those who have ears to hear ...
 Look, those who have eyes to see?
O God, give me the humbleness of those shepherds
 who saw in the cold December darkness
 the Coming of Light
 the Advent of Love!

Musical Offering: Angels Carol (with harp)

II. ANNUNCIATION

Scripture: Luke 1:26-33 - ERIC

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Poetry: "Wouldn't It Be Grand To Be An Angel" by Ann Weems - CHRIS

Wouldn't it be grand to be an angel
and have as your address
"The Realms of the Glory of God"?
And swing on rainbows,
and gather stars in your pockets,
winging in and out of earth
in a flurry of moondust
with the messages of God?
Comforting the distressed, warning the righteous,
delivering the just, guarding little children?
Of course, we can comfort and warn
and deliver and guard.
Maybe, if we get that right,
we can swing on rainbows later.

Carol: "Angels We Have Heard On High"

III. MANGER

Poetry: "The Child Is Born Again" by Ann Weems - ERIC

Each year the Child is born again.
Each year some new heart
finally hears
finally sees
finally knows love.
And in heaven
there is great rejoicing!

There is a festival of stars!
There is celebration among the angels!
For in the finding of one lost sheep,
 the heart of the Shepherd is glad, and
 Christmas has happened once more.
The Child is born anew
 and one more knee is bowed!

Scripture: Luke 2:1-7 - CHRIS

1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Musical Offering: “Maria Wiegenlied”

IV. SHEPHERDS AND ANGELS

Scripture: Luke 2:8-14 - CHRIS

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

Poetry: “The Sacrament of Christmas” by Howard Thurman - ERIC

I make and act of faith toward all humankind,
Where doubts would linger and suspicions brood.

I make and act of joy toward all sad hearts,
Where laughter pales and tears abound.

I make an act of strength toward feeble things,

Where life grows dim and death draws near.

I make an act of trust toward all of life,
Where fears preside and distrusts keep watch.

I make an act of love toward friend and foe,
Where trust is weak and hate burns bright.

I make a deed to God of all my days –
and look out on life with quiet eyes.

OFFERTORY - CHRIS

Musical Offering: Le Sommeil de l'Enfant Jesus

V. FULFILLMENT

Reflection: "Silent Night, Joyful Night" - ERIC

Musical Offering: Angel's from the Realms of Glory

Candle Lighting

Notes: Lights are lowered until COMPLETELY out. We sit in darkness for approx. 1 minute. Then, a match is struck, and the Christ Candle on the Advent Wreath is lit. The readings begin (using flashlights where necessary).

The Gospel of John (John 1:1-5, 9-14 [adapted])

ERIC: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and his life was the light of the world. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

CHRIS: The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of human will, but of God.

ERIC: And the word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. In Jesus Christ was life, and his life was the light of the world. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

Carol: Silent Night
Carol: Joy to the World!
Blessing