

Countryside Community Church WORSHIP



Surrogacy ~ Oil paint, charcoal and copper leaf on canvas ~ Hannah Garrity ~ A Sanctified Art LLC ~ sanctifiedart.org

Christmas Eve Children & Families Service

December 24, 2024

† Indicates those places where those who are able are invited to stand.
Text in **bold** indicates places where the congregation is invited to join in response.

Gathering

PRELUDE

WELCOME

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

†CALL TO WORSHIP & LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLES

The West Family

One: The people who once lived in darkness have been given a great light!

Many: Praise be to God who has heard our cries.

One: Our souls sing out God's praise!

Many: God has brought us a light of Hope and Peace.

One: Tonight, in this place, the Light of God's Love is given to us!

- Lighting of the Advent Wreath - Candles of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, and Christ Candle -

Many: And we shall see that light and let it shine through our lives. Amen.

†CAROL

Hymn #148 *O Come All Ye Faithful* (vs. 1-2)

OPENING PRAYER

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

†PASSING THE PEACE

Even as the heavens opened and angels spoke, the first word they sang was 'Peace.' Even as confused shepherds came from their hills and flocks, uncertain but hopeful, they greeted each other with 'Peace.' In the midst of our preparations and excitement, we take a moment to greet one another with a word of peace: peace in this place, peace in our homes, peace in this world...

One: The Peace of God be With You

Many: And also with you.

RESPONSE IN MUSIC

O Holy Night (vs. 1)

Hearing the Word

FIRST LESSON

God Calls Mary and Joseph

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

After many years of people searching for God and trying to understand God's way, the time had come for God to send a beloved Son, the Messiah. Like the prophets before, God sent heralds to tell the world that Jesus was coming. God sent angels to many different people to help them prepare- to Zechariah and Elizabeth, to Joseph, and to Mary. When Mary meets the angel, she is undoubtedly afraid, but she responds with a song from her heart. Here is the story from Luke chapter 1:

One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee with a message for a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. The angel greeted Mary and said, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you."

Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary, "Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end."

Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen? I am not married!"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God. Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. Nothing is impossible for God!"

Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said." And the angel left her.

We honor Mary for her strength and courage to face the unknown and to embrace God's calling for her life. Like her we want to share the good news.

Children Process: All children dressed as Mary and Joseph

†CAROL

Hymn #144 *O Little Town Of Bethlehem* (vs. 1, 3)

SECOND LESSON

Preparing in a Stable

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

Like all expectant parents, Mary and Joseph probably had many questions and worries. They had the additional challenge of traveling for a Roman census near the end of the pregnancy. When they got to Bethlehem, there was no room, so Mary prepared to deliver the baby Jesus in a stable. Luke tells us of Jesus' humble birth:

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

Children process: All children dressed as sheep, donkeys and pigs

†CAROL

Jesus Our Brother (vs. 1, 2, 6)

THIRD LESSON

Jesus is Born

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

After preparing in the table, Mary was ready to labor and deliver. Luke continues:

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And so the stable Bethlehem will always be remembered as Jesus' birthplace. We want to help Mary and Joseph take care of the baby, so we get the manger ready.

Children process: All children dressed as bunnies, camels, mice, horses, goats, etc.

†CAROL

Hymn #147 *Away in a Manger* (vs. 1-2)

FOURTH LESSON

Angels and Shepherds

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

Jesus is born! But how will the world know? Who would think to look in a stable? God will help spread the good news! A star shown above the stable and angels filled the skies. Who did the angels speak to first? To kings or soldiers? No. To shepherds, common laborers in the field. In a common place, shared with common people, the most remarkable miracle. Luke tells the story:

There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises:
Glory to God in the heavenly heights,
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

Let's join our voices with the shepherds and angels as we bring our angels and shepherds and sing
Angels We Have Heard on High.

Children Process: All children dressed as angels and shepherds to process

†CAROL

Hymn #155 *Angels We Have Heard On High* (vs. 1-2)

As the star rose in the sky and the angels sang, wise men from far away saw the star and began a long journey. They followed the star until they found Mary, Joseph and Jesus. The gospel of Matthew tells us this part of the story:

They set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Children Process: All children dressed as wise men/children

†CAROL Hymn #151 *The First Noel*
(vs. 1, 2, refrain, 3, 5, refrain)
(After the carol children are dismissed to return to seats with families)

Responding to the Word

SHARING OUR GIFTS Christmas Offering Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Thank you, God of love, for the promise of this season.

We are grateful for the generosity we feel as Jesus' light comes to us. May these gifts represent a new joyous sharing among us for the benefit of all. Amen.

MUSICAL REFLECTION *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly* arr. Alex Ritter

SHARING GOD'S LIGHT AND LOVE (Glowsticks) Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

†CAROL Hymn #145 *Silent Night*

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen* arr. Alex Ritter

Tyler Gruttemeyer, vocals - Matt Wallace, saxophone
Alex Ritter, organ and piano - Steve Gomez, bass - Carlos Figueroa, drums

Christmas Eve Flowers

The altar flowers were given by Cathy and Rick MacInnes,
along with their daughters and sons-in-law - Alissa and Beau and Amy and Dan -
in loving memory of Charles "Mac" MacInnes.

Countryside Christmas Offering





How does a weary world rejoice? We Make Room

There is Room

The world may feel like one long stretch of night,
like an endless winter, or a hovering rain cloud.
And life may feel like walking into the wind,
an uphill climb in every direction,
but we can still open the door.
We can't calm every storm,
but we can turn on the porch lights.
We can add chairs to the table.
We can keep clean sheets on the guest bed, just in case.
We can hold the elevator,
and learn pronouns.
We can tell stories of belonging,
and take turns listening.
We can learn each other's names,
and plant trees for our children.
We can study privilege
and advocate for mental health.
We can insist,
every single day,
in a million different ways:
there is room,
there is room,
there is room for you here.
We can't calm every storm,
but we can turn on the porch lights.