

GATHERING IN GOD'S WORD

Silent Meditation before Worship

“Christmas brings us together, too, though often in more subtle ways. The birth of Christ reminds us that we are all God’s children. And, as one human family, the walls that separate us feel harsher, whether they are visible walls of steel or invisible walls made of something stronger – like resentment or hatred. ... Among those present to celebrate Jesus’ birth were sheep and shepherds, choirs of angels, and glistening stars. Differences existed without becoming barriers and this joyous mingling reflects the bliss of heaven ... Each heavenly being has individual beauty, but they glorify God together. The wonder intensifies as the circle expands. And, surely, the same is true for us.” – Thomas G. Long and Donyelle C. McCray, *A Surprising God: Advent Devotions for an Uncertain Time*

Prelude
Ringing the Bell

Accompanist Ann Siverling

Centering Prayer: **Emmanuel, God-With-Us.**

As you breathe in, pray, “Emmanuel.”

As you breathe out, pray, “God-With-Us.”

Being Invited in the Word – Isaiah 9:2-7 (from the Common English Bible, © 2011)

² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned. ³ You have made the nation great; you have increased its joy. They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest, as those who divide plunder rejoice. ⁴ As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke that burdened them, the staff on their shoulders, and the rod of their oppressor. ⁵ Because every boot of the thundering warriors, and every garment rolled in blood will be burned, fuel for the fire. ⁶ A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ There will be vast authority and endless peace for David's throne and for his kingdom, establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness now and forever. The zeal of the LORD of heavenly forces will do this.

* Gathering Hymn #133 – O Come, All Ye Faithful
(from *Glory to God*, © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press)

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant;
O come ye; O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come, and behold him, born the King of angels!
O come, let us adore him!
O come, let us adore him!
O come let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

True God from true God, Light from light eternal,
Born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;
Very God, begotten, not created!
O come, let us adore him!
O come, let us adore him!
O come let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation;
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!
O come, let us adore him!
O come, let us adore him!
O come let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!
O come, let us adore him!
O come, let us adore him!
O come let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

* Opening Praise (adapted from Rev. Christine Jerrett)

One: God is telling a story in our lives.

Many: It's quite a story-

One: Full of the promises God makes and our struggles to trust;

Many: Full of mystery and angels with surprising news;

One: Full of hard endings

Many: And unexpected new beginnings.

One: Come, hear the story.

Many: Pay attention to the angels' message

One: In your heart,

Many: In this place and time.

One: Then join all creation in worshiping the God who tells it

Many: Full of grace and truth;

One: The God who comes in Jesus,

Many: The Word made flesh,

ALL: And makes our story holy.

Lighting the Christ Candle

"The Long Road to Bethlehem" by Thomas G. Long and Donyelle C. McCray

Advent Hymn #92 – While We Are Waiting, Come (verse 1)

(from *Glory to God*, © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press)

While we are waiting, come;

While we are waiting, come.

Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel,

While we are waiting, come.

* Christmas Prayer (based on *Spill the Beans* resource, iss. 25, © 2017):

This is the night for rejoicing. This is the night for loving. This is the night for sharing wonder and awe. This is the night when we turn our thoughts and our prayers out into the world where God's light is needed; where God's peace is sought; where God's Son is found. Holy One, we pray for our world: where peace is a distant dream – come dwell with us; where light is overwhelmed in the shadows – come shine around us; where joy is a forgotten emotion – come move among us; where hope is longed for – come, Lord Jesus, and live with us again! We pray this night that in every corner of the world, the light of Christ will shine brilliant and sure, overcoming all that threatens to obliterate hope forevermore. (Please take a moment for silent contemplation.)

Promise breathed. Promise blazed. Promise born.

Alleluia! Amen.

* Promise of God's Grace

* Passing the Peace of Christ

* Song of Peace: "Let There Be Peace on Earth"

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**Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God our Creator, we are family.
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.**

**Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow.
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.**

HEARING GOD'S WORD

Rejoicing Through the Word – Psalm 96 (from the Common English Bible, © 2011)

¹ Sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth! ² Sing to the LORD! Bless his name! Share the news of his saving work every single day! ³ Declare God's glory among the nations; declare his wondrous works among all people ⁴ because the LORD is great and so worthy of praise. He is awesome beyond all other gods ⁵ because all the gods of the nations are just idols, but it is the LORD who created heaven! ⁶ Greatness and grandeur are in front of him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. ⁷ Give to the LORD, all families of the nations— give to the LORD glory and power! ⁸ Give to the LORD the glory due his name! Bring gifts! Enter his courtyards! ⁹ Bow down to the LORD in his holy splendor! Tremble before him, all the earth! ¹⁰ Tell the nations, "The LORD rules! Yes, he set the world firmly in place; it won't be shaken. He will judge all people fairly." ¹¹ Let heaven celebrate! Let the earth rejoice! Let the sea and everything in it roar! ¹² Let the countryside and everything in it celebrate! Then all the trees of the forest too will shout out joyfully ¹³ before the LORD because he is coming! He is coming to establish justice on the earth! He will establish justice in the world rightly. He will establish justice among all people fairly.

Story for Children of All Ages

The Spirit of Christmas by Nancy Tillman

* Hymn #119 – Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
(from *Glory to God*, © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press)

Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king.
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners, reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise;
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold him come,
Off-spring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the incarnate deity,
Pleased in flesh with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king!"
Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the son of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth,
Born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king!"

Hearing the Sacred Story – Luke 2:1-20 (from *New Revised Standard Version*, © 1989)

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. 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!" ¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Christmas Message – Rev. Lisa Johnson

* Hymn #110 – Love Has Come
(from *Glory to God*, © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press)

Love has come: a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
Hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love!
Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love!
Glory to God on high.

Love is born! Come, share in the wonder.
Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of his mother;

What is the name her heart is saying?

Love! Love!

Love is the name she whispers.

Love! Love!

Jesus, Emmanuel.

Love has come and never will leave us!

Love is life everlasting and free.

Love is Jesus within and among us.

Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.

Love! Love!

Love is the gift of Christmas.

Love! Love!

Praise to you, God on high!

Celebrating the Lord's Supper – *Our tradition in this congregation is to partake of the bread whenever you feel prepared to do so and to hold the wine/juice until all have been served so that we can all partake together. This gives us the chance to participate in this holy mystery as we participate in our faith – both as individuals and as a community.*

Invitation to the Table

Great Thanksgiving

One: God be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

Many: We lift them up to God.

One: Let us give thanks to God Most High.

Many: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Communion Prayer

Lord's Prayer (unison): **Our Father 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 sins as we forgive those who sin 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. Amen.**

Words of Institution

Sharing the Bread and the Cup

Sung Prayer of Thanksgiving: #134 – Joy to the World (verse 1)

(from *Glory to God*, © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press)

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.

Offering

Sung Prayer of Dedication #134 – Joy to the World (verse 2)

(from *Glory to God*, © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press)

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!

Let all their songs employ,

While field and floods, rocks, hills, and plains

Repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

Declaring Our Hope with the Word – Titus 2:11-14 (from the *Common English Bible*, © 2011)

¹¹ The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. ¹² It educates us so that we can live sensible, ethical, and godly lives right now by rejecting ungodly lives and the desires of this world. ¹³ At the same time we wait for the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of our great God and savior Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ He gave himself for us in order to rescue us from every kind of lawless behavior, and cleanse a special people for himself who are eager to do good actions.

Festival of Lights

Pastor Lisa will light a candle from the Christ Candle. The ushers will then light their candles from the pastor's candle and take the light out into the congregation. As you pass this Light of Christ to one another, please also pass the greeting, "Jesus Christ is the light of the world." To avoid dripping wax on the floor or pews, please try not to tip the candles once they've been lit. Thank you.

Holding Space for Holy Silence

* Hymn #122 – Silent Night

(from *Glory to God*, © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press)

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing "Alleluia:
Christ the Savior is born;
Christ the Savior is born!"

Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Silent night, holy night!
Wondrous star, lend thy light;
With the angels let us sing
Alleluia to our King:
Christ the Savior is born;
Christ the Savior is born.

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,

Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

* Benediction