

Christmas Eve 2022

We Gather in Expectation

Prelude

Welcome

Come all who wander weary in this world – a world once crowned in splendour,
once bathed in radiant harmony, a world that danced as one.

Come all who search for meaning and all who yearn for love.

Come all who search for hope – for shelter from the storms of life.

Come all who rejoice, for in our midst has come the Promised One of old.

For on this night is born in hope the festive dream come true,
the one who breaks the chains of our sorrows and our fears.

The breath of God, the smile of joy, the face of one we only dreamed we'd see.

In Bethlehem is born the one who is for all.

And on this holiest of nights,

I call on all heaven and nature to sing, and to repeat the sounding joy,
far as the curse is found.

I call on all creatures who dance within the earth, you plants and rocks and animals,
to bless this holy night.

For unto us a child is born – the very dream of God,
the Word who breaks the silence of despair.

Rejoice with me, and pray that once again,
the tent of God will be pitched with us, the love of God unfolded,
the hope of all the ages born in us tonight.

May it be so. Amen.

Carol: VU 29 "Hark the Glad Sound"

Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes,
the Saviour promised long:
let every heart prepare a throne,
and every voice a song.

He comes, the prisoners to release
in Satan's bondage held;
the gates of brass before him burst,
the iron fetters yield.

He comes, the broken heart to bind,
the bleeding soul to cure,
and with the treasures of his grace
to bless the humble poor.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,
your welcome shall proclaim;
and heaven's eternal arches ring
with your beloved name.

Call to Worship

We gather on this holy night like Joseph and Mary,

Apprehensive, uprooted, frustrated with life's circumstances.

We gather on this holy night like the shepherds,

Feeling alone and pensive in our darkneses,

Afraid when confronted with bright, holy apparitions.

We gather on this holy night when we hear the good news:

The Saviour comes – comes offering hope to calm our fears,

comes offering the peace of reassurance of our worth in God's heart,

comes offering joy that overcomes our irritations and resentments,

comes offering love that surpasses all knowledge and human experience.

Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness

have seen a great light;

those who lived in a land of deep darkness—

on them light has shined.

You have multiplied exultation;

you have increased its joy;

they rejoice before you

as with joy at the harvest,

as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden

and the bar across their shoulders,

the rod of their oppressor,

you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For all the boots of the tramping warriors

and all the garments rolled in blood

shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

For a child has been born for us,

a son given to us;

authority rests upon his shoulders,

and he is named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Great will be his authority,

and there shall be endless peace

for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it

with justice and with righteousness

from this time onward and forevermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Carol: VU 44 "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold,
'Peace on the earth, good will to all,
from heaven's all-gracious King!'
The world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come
with peaceful wings unfurled;
and still their heavenly music floats
o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains
they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife
the world has suffered long;
beneath the angel strain have rolled
two thousand years of wrong;
and warring humankind hears not
the love song which they bring.
O hush the noise, and cease your strife,
to hear the angels sing.

For, lo! the days are hastening on,
by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendours fling,
and the whole world send back the song
which now the angels sing.

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy

Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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 in the guest room.

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

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." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

When the world seems predictable

Stuck in patterns of injustice and hurt

the Holy astonishes us with good news

and we find Awe.

Candle is lit.

Hymn "Light the Advent Candle"

Light the Christmas candles now

Sing of Donkey, Sheep and cow

Birthday candles for the king

Let the Alleluias ring.

Candle, candle burning bright

Shining in the cold winter night

Candle, candle burning bright

Fill our hearts with Christmas light.

Children's Time: "Humphrey's First Christmas" by Carol Heyer

Anthem: "As Mary Sleeps"

Psalm 96

Sing to God a new song;

sing your praise, all the earth.

Sing and bless God's holy name,

tell the glad news of salvation from day to day.

**Declare God's glory among the nations,
among all the peoples God's wonderful works.**

For great is God and greatly to be praised,
to be revered above all the gods.

**For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but you, O God, made the heavens.**

Honour and majesty attend you,

strength and beauty are in your sanctuary.

Ascribe to God, you families of peoples,

ascribe to God glory and strength.

**Ascribe glory to God's name,
bring an offering and enter God's courts.**

Worship God in the beauty of holiness,
and let the whole earth stand in awe.

Say among the nations: It is God who reigns!

The world is made firm and cannot be shaken.

God judges the peoples in equity.

Let the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad;

**let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
let the fields exult, and all that is in them.**

Then let all the trees of the forest sing for joy,
for you come, O God, to judge the earth.

**You shall judge the earth in righteousness,
its peoples with your truth.**

Carol: VU 59 "Joy to the World"

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.

Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns:

let all their songs employ,

while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains

repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,

repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground:
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the earth with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Carol: VU 64 "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary;
and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.

O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessed gift of heaven.
No ear may hear his coming;
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in;
be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel.

Christmas Prayer

On this night, in the spirit of God who so loves the world as to take human form,
let us pray for the needs of the whole world.

We pray for those whose lives are disrupted by forces beyond their control;

We pray for peace and goodwill among nations;

We pray for the earth as it longs for the promise of God's new creation;

We pray for all who are hungry or cold;

All who are oppressed by circumstance or by other people;

All who are sick or dying;

All who are lonely or frightened;

All for whom Christmas is a time of sadness;

And, finally, for all who have gone before us, whose company we miss,
but who, in the grace of God, still share Christmas with us.

With them, and with the multitude of angels and God's faithful of every time and place,
we celebrate the hope and the mystery that Jesus, the Christ, is born.

Amen.

Lighting The Candles

***Benediction**

As we go from our worship this night,

May the joy of the angels sing in our hearts;

May the hope of the shepherds enliven our thoughts;

May the strong faith of Mary strengthen our spirits;

And may the love of the Baby shine in our lives.

God's blessing be upon you all, this holy night and always.

Amen.

***Carol 67 VU** "Silent Night, Holy Night"

Postlude

We Depart in Awe