

Tuesday December 24, 2024
Christmas Eve

Prelude: "Away In A Manger (A Medley)" Music: Jonathan E. Spilman, James R. Murray, and William J. Kirkpatrick

Welcome (Monologues written by Susan Lukey. Used with permission.)

Lighting the Advent Candle Written by Doreen Hewitson. Used with permission.

Tonight is the night the baby is born.

We'll all be happy come Christmas morn.

**The presents are wrapped and under the tree,
a message of cheer for you and for me.**

Have you not been listening, did you not hear
that Christmas is not about presents, not here!

It's about Jesus, born in a manger,
a friend to all people, and even a stranger.

The presents are great, but the gifts are all his.

It's his birthday, after all, this is your quiz.

What do we celebrate on this special night?

Do we celebrate a man, with reindeer in flight?

Or is it a baby, so soft and so small
that one night long ago was born in a stall?

**The man in the suit we're eager to see
but it's not really about you or about me.**

**It's about Jesus, his mother and dad
and the time together they had.**

**It's about shepherds and angels and bells
and stories the Bible shares with us and tells
about how the small baby grew up to be
a special kind of man that showed you and me
how to live a life so full and so kind
that's what we should all have on our mind.**

You're right and I'll tell you what happiness is

It's celebrating this night and ALL that it is!

So let's light a candle, the white one you see

To remind us of Jesus and what is to be! (*The Christ candle is lit.*)

Opening Prayer (*unison*) Written by **Nora Vedress**, *Calvary U.C., Prince Albert, Sask.* Used with permission.

Tonight we join our voices with all the angels in heaven and on earth who sing: Glory to God in the highest!

Tonight we give thanks for the brilliance of the stars over our heads. We give thanks for the peace and sacredness of this sanctuary. We give thanks for the hope we are offered when we gather in your name, O

God. But, most of all, we come tonight to give thanks for the birth of Jesus Christ that fills us with such joy.

For, in the face of this small child, we are reminded that you are indeed God-with-us. As these candles burn, we are able to proclaim that your light shines upon us, shattering the shadows that threatens to overwhelm us. Tonight may we all find reason to rejoice for our time of waiting is over, God has arrived, hope, peace, joy and love have been born in us once again. Amen.

Hymn VU 60 O Come, All Ye Faithful Words: English Translation Frederick Oakeley, 1841, et al.

Music attributed to John Francis Wade, ca. 1743. Words and Music in the Public Domain.

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.

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

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38 The Birth of Jesus Foretold

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him 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 ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Mary's Monologue: *Mary, with her shawl wrapped around her, walks up to the mic.*

This is a disaster. It was so amazing and so awesome when the angel came to me. I was overwhelmed with wonder. I felt as if I could do anything. But now the reality is setting in. What will Joseph say? What will my family say? What will the community say? How could God do this to me? I think I'm having a panic attack! *take several quick, shallow breaths*

Oh dear, I said "Yes" to this. *breathing gets quieter, slower*

What will Joseph say? Will he abandon me? *breathing speeds up again.*

I really think I'm having a panic attack!

Sheep: Baa! God is with you; you are not alone. *Mary pats lamb and smiles. They leave together.*

Hymn VU 14 To a Maid Whose Name Was Mary Words: Gracia Grindal. Music: Rusty Edwards.

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To a maid whose name was Mary,
the angel Gabriel came.

“Fear not,” the angel told her,
“I come to bring good news,
good news I come to tell you,
good news, I say, good news.”

“For you are highly favoured
by God the Lord of all,
who even now is with you.
You are on earth most blest,
you are most blest, most blessed,
God chose you, you are blest!”

But Mary was most troubled
to hear the angel’s word.
What was the angel saying?
It troubled her to hear,
to hear the angel’s message,
it troubled her to hear.

“Fear not, for God is with you,
and you shall bear a child.
His name shall be called Jesus,
God’s offspring from on high.
And he shall reign forever,
forever reign on high.”

“How shall this be” said Mary,
“that I should be with child?”
The angel answered quickly,
“The power of the Most High
will come upon you shortly,
your child shall be God’s child.”

As Mary heard the angel,
she wondered at his words,
“Behold, I am your handmaid,”
she said unto her God.
“So be it; I am ready
according to your word.”

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25 The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

Joseph’s Monologue: *Joseph enters, leaning on his staff.*

My life is a nightmare now. I was working so hard to get ready for the wedding, building a house and all of the furniture that Mary and I would need. Then she comes to tell me that she is pregnant. What am I supposed to say to that? She says the child is from God. What and I supposed to say to that? I have been so angry, I love Mary. I want to care for her. But how could she do this to me?

And then this dream – telling me it will be alright. Okay. I’m a good person. I’ll do what God asks, but my life still feels like a nightmare right now.

Sheep: Baa! God is with you; you are not alone. *Joseph pats the lamb, shrugs, gives a big sigh, and they leave together*

Solo: O Holy Night

Shannon Wakeling

Scripture: Luke 2:8-16 The Shepherds and the Angels

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.

Shepherd's Monologue: *super excited!!!*

It was amazing! No. Awesome! No. Tremendously outstanding! Astonishing, marvellous, inspiring, remarkable, incredible, surprising! *take a deep breath, try to calm down.*

The angels. Hundreds of them. No, thousands of them. *speak faster and faster.*

The sky was full of them. I was there and still I don't believe it. And then one spoke and told us of God's peace. And then told us about a baby from God, in Bethlehem. And that we should go and find the baby. And that's what we're doing. Going to Bethlehem. I just can't believe it. It's so amazing. But wait a minute. We left all the sheep in the field. *turn back to the field, then back to the other shepherds.*

Yikes, no one is watching the sheep! *look back and forth between the field and Bethlehem*

I don't know what to do.

Sheep: Baa! God is with you; you are not alone.

Shepherd: *pat lamb* Yes, little lamb, you're so good at helping me remember that! *leave together*

Hymn VU 38 Angels We Have Heard on High Words: French traditional, translation James Chadwick, 1860.
Music: French carol melody, arranged by Edward Shippen Barnes, 1937.
Words, Translation, Music and Arrangement in the Public Domain

Angels we have heard on high
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echoing their joyous strains.
Glo-----ria, in excelsis Deo!
Glo-----ria, in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
which inspire your heavenly song?
Glo-----ria, in excelsis Deo!
Glo-----ria, in excelsis Deo!

Come to Bethlehem and see
Christ whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.
Glo-----ria, in excelsis Deo!
Glo-----ria, in excelsis Deo!

See him in a manger laid,
whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
while our hearts in love we raise.
Glo-----ria, in excelsis Deo!
Glo-----ria, in excelsis Deo!

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12 The Visit of the Magi

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, 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. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Wise One’s Monologue:

You should have heard the arguments. We should go this way. No, the star is telling us to go this way. No, I’m sure it is this way. Talk about confusion. And then what to bring for a gift for a royal baby. God, frankincense, myrrh. I thought it should be a soft blanket, stitched with gold embroidery, of course. Yup – there were arguments before we left. Confusion about which way to go, confusion about what gift to bring. It’s a wonder we even got on the road. Somehow, we made it to Jerusalem. We were welcomed into the presence of King Herod because, of course, we are important people. But somehow, I don’t trust him. Yes, he gave us a possible location for the child. But he can’t be too happy about this baby. It doesn’t seem to be his son. He said to return and tell him about the baby, but I don’t trust his motives. It’s all quite confusing. I’m not sure how we’re going to make sense of all this. Now, which way is Bethlehem? Looks like my friends have decided which way to go, though they aren’t usually right about anything. They’ll need my input.

shake head Confusing, confusing, confusing.

Sheep: Baa! God is with you; you are not alone.

Wise One: *sigh, relax* One step at a time Just one step at a time. *Leave*

Hymn VU 74 What Child Is This Words: William Chatterton Dix, 1865.

Music: English melody, 16th C; harmony attributed to John Stainer, 1871. Words, Music and Harmony in the Public Domain

What child is this, who laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?

Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
hast, haste to bring him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!

Why lies he in such mean estate
where ox and ass are feeding?

Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading.

This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
hast, haste to bring him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
come, one and all, to own him.

The King of Kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him.

This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
hast, haste to bring him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!

Scripture: Luke 2:1-7 The Birth of Jesus

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.

Innkeeper's Monologue: *stand with lantern and yawn.*

What do people expect? That they can just come knocking at my door anytime of the day or night and find a room? Especially with the census going on and all these extra people. What do they think I am, a miracle worker? I was just tucked into my bed, everything done for the day, and then I heard it again. Knock, knock, knock. It was a young couple. She was pregnant and she was in labour. What was I to do? I had no room. I told them that. But tough as I try to be, I've got a soft heart when it comes to babies. So, I took them to the barn. I have no clue what they're going to do tomorrow. But for tonight they have a warm spot...a bit stinky but still warm. I'm heading back to bed.

I do feel sorry for that young couple, though! Having their baby in a barn!

Sheep: Baa! God is with them; they are not alone.

Innkeeper: That's right! Now you get back to the barn and remind them of that! *yawn and leave for bed*

Invitation:

Today we've heard from some of the key characters in the story, who have shared with us what they felt and what experienced on that first Christmas. As we sing, I'd invite you to think about which character fits for you today. Which character in the nativity resonates with you? Just remember, we all have a place in the story. We are all welcome at the manger. *Christina, Simon and Samson come to the front.*

Hymn VU 69 Away in a Manger Words: Author unknown. Music: William James Kirkpatrick, 1895.
Words and Music in the Public Domain.

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

Sheep: That's Emmanuel; that's God with us; we are not alone! *everyone goes back to pews*

Invitation to Invest in God's Mission

We did not arrive here tonight carrying gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, but such as we have we present to our Lord and Saviour. Through these gifts, we can help others know that God is with them; they are not alone. Our tithes and offerings will be received.

Offertory Hymn "Bless Our Hands" *to tune Good King Wencaslas*
Words © 2003 Louise Robson. Used with permission. Music in the Public Domain.

Bless our hands to do your work, bless the gifts we're bearing.
May your love and grace be known in the way we're sharing.
Peace and hope and joy and love – these are gifts worth giving.
These be ours to pass along when in Christ we're living.

Prayer of Dedication

Holy One, may the gifts we offer in love be used to create hope and peace and joy in our troubled world.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Prayer

We gather in worship, people of God, to prepare ourselves to hear the song of the angels, to go in heart and in mind to Bethlehem, to see the loving-kindness of our God, the babe lying in the manger. On this night, in the spirit of the God who so loves the world as to take human form, let us pray for the needs of the whole world.

We remember especially those whose lives are disrupted by forces beyond their control.....

We pray for peace and goodwill among the nations.....

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

We remember before God all who are poor, hungry or cold.....

all who are oppressed by circumstances, addictions or by others.....

all who are sick or dying.....

all who are lonely or frightened, and all for whom Christmas is a time of sadness.....

Lastly, let us remember before God those who have gone before us, whose company and voices we miss, but who, in the grace and goodness 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 Christ is born. Amen.

Hymn VU 57 Oh, How Joyfully Words: Brian Wren. Music: Sicilian melody, 18th C. Words © 1993 Hope Publishing Co.
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Oh, how joyfully, oh, how hopefully,
waits the world on Christmas Eve!
Love comes healing, God revealing.
Friends be joyful and believe!

Oh, how joyfully, oh, how peacefully,
sleeps the world on Christmas Night!
Sins are covered, grace discovered.
In our darkness shines the light!

Oh, how joyfully, oh, how thankfully,
wakes the world on Christmas Morn!
God has spoken, death is broken.
Hallelujah! Christ is born!

Sharing of the Christ Light

Commissioning

May the God of the stable help us to see the wonder of Christmas:

the wonder of children who can hardly wait,

the wonder of Mary and Joseph who feel the power of God's love,

the wonder of the shepherds who hear the Good News,

the wonder of the Magi who kneel and offer their gifts,

the wonder of the ages that God would come in such a simple birth.

Amen

Sheep: Baa! God is with you! You are not alone! No matter how messy it gets!

Hymn VU 67 Silent Night, Holy Night Words: Joseph Mohr, 1818. English translation: John Freeman Young, 1863.
Music: Franz Xavier Grüber, 1818. Words, Translation and Music in the Public Domain.

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 Hallelujah,
Christ the Saviour is born, Christ the Saviour 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.