

Wednesday December 24, 2025
Christmas Eve

We Gather In Anticipation

Poem: “Hush” Lucinda Hynett

Prelude: “Ave Maria” Guillo Caccini for Cello and Piano.

Lucine Petrosyan Cello

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 darknesses,

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.

Hymn VU 60 “O Come, All Ye Faithful” vss. 1-4 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.

God of God, light of light,

lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;

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 in the highest:

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

See how the shepherds summoned to his cradle,

leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;

we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;

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.

Hymn VU 14 "To a Maid Whose Name Was Mary" Words: Gracia Grindal. Music: Rusty Edwards
 Words and Music © 1984 Hope Publishing Company.
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To a maid whose name was Mary,
 the angel Gabriel came.

"Fear not," the angel told her,
 "I have 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.”

Poem: Untitled Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022)

Lighting the Advent Candles:

Tonight is the night we have been waiting for, when waiting is transformed into awestruck wonder. We celebrate Jesus coming into this world as we light the Advent candles.

The first candle reminds us of the ultimate hope that comes through our Savior’s birth. *(candle is lit)*

The second candle beckons us to the peace of Christ that surpasses all understanding. *(candle is lit)*

The third candle reminds us of the Good News of great joy that tells us God’s love is stronger than human sin. *(candle is lit)*

The fourth candle invites us to share the joy of the shepherds and angels announcing the Savior’s birth. *(candle is lit)*

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.

Hymn VU 64 “O Little Town of Bethlehem” Words: Phillips Brooks 1868. Music: Lewis Henry Redner 1868.
 Words and Music in the Public Domain.

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.

Lighting the Christ Candle:

Hymn: “Advent Song” Words and Music: Mary Lu Walker, 1975.
 Words and Music © 1975 Mary Lu Walker, © 2001 Butterfly Productions.
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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.

Scripture: Luke 2:8-14 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!”

Poem: “Look Up!” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Hymn VU 38 “Angels We Have Heard on High” Words: French traditional, translation James Chadwick.
 Music: French carol melody, arranged by Edward Shippen Barnes.
 Words, 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.
 Gloria in excelsis Deo!

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

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

Scripture: Luke 2:15-20

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.

Hymn VU 43 "Go, Tell It on the Mountain" Words: John Wesley Work II, 1907. Music: African-American spiritual 19th C.
 Arrangement: United Reformed Church (UK). Arrangement © Oxford University Press.
 Words and Music in the Public Domain. OneLicense.net A620168

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
 Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent fields by night,
 behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.
 Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
 Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

The shepherds feared and trembled when lo, above the earth
 rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Saviour's birth!
 Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
 Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born,
 and God sent our salvation that blessed Christmas morn.
 Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
 Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

Prayer (unison)

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.

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. Our tithes and our offerings will be received.

Anthem: "O! Night Divine!" W.J. Marsh.

Nancy Quinn Soprano

Offertory Hymn: to the tune *Hymn to Joy* by Ludwig van Beethoven, 1824; adapt. Edward Hodges, 1864.

Music and Adaptation in the Public Domain. Words: Unknown.

Joyful, joyful, Lord we bring you gifts that you can use today.

Take them, bless them, may your kingdom spread to all the world, we pray.

We are here: our time, our talents, we would dedicate as well.

May we show Christ's love within us, by our lives our faith to tell.

Prayer of Dedication

May the gifts we share be from the heart, just as yours was that day, God of Bethlehem.

May they serve those who look for welcome, those who struggle with loss and grief, those who
need to be blessed by hope, and love, and healing. This we pray in the name of your Child, Jesus.
Amen.

Poem: "Descent" Malcolm Guite

Hymn VU 44 "It Came upon the Midnight Clear" Words: Edmund Hamilton Sears, 1849, alt..

Music: Richard Storrs Willis, 1850.

Words and Music in the Public Domain.

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, goodwill 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.

Lighting Of The Candles

Duet: "What Child is This" For cello and piano.

Lucine Petrosyan Cello

Commissioning and Benediction

Let us go to be the gift another needs,

sharing God's blessings of love and grace,

running to tell the Story we heard from the shepherds.

Let us go to be the comfort which can swaddle others,

sharing Jesus' compassion with the poor and needy,

welcoming the holiness offered by the most vulnerable we meet.

Let us go to enkindle the lives around us,

sharing the Spirit's peace with all the broken,

learning the language of hope from the children in our midst.

Go in hope, go in peace, go in joy, and go in love!

Hymn VU 67 "Silent Night, Holy Night" Words: Joseph Mohr 1818.

English translation: John Freeman Young 1863, et al. Music: Franz Xavier Grüber 1818.

Words, English 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 host 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.

We Depart In Awe and Wonder