

Christmas Eve

“A Light in the Darkness”

DECEMBER 24, 2024

Mifflin Avenue United Methodist Church

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On this night of nights, the church bids you welcome as we gather in expectation and gratitude for the gift of the Christ Child, who came that we may have life. This night, no one is a stranger. All are joined together as one family through the miracle of the birth of one small baby. We come from different walks of life as we gather in this place on this most holy night. Some of us come from various faith traditions, and others of us were born and raised in these very churches.

However we come, we come knowing we are loved by God. Let us approach the manger as the shepherds, who came to see this wondrous thing of which they had been told. Let us come to the manger with the steadfastness of Joseph who heeded the words of the angel and obeyed his Lord. Let us come to the manger with the love of Mary who responded to extraordinary words with absolute faith and certainty. Let us come to the manger like the three wise men, who left their lives and followed the star.

ORDER OF WORSHIP – 7:00 PM

CENTERING

CENTERING WORDS

On this holy night, we meet a great mystery. In the quiet of a stable, we hear the cry of a newborn child. In the stillness of a field, we see the glory of God. Come and find the mystery of love.

PRELUDE AND BRINGING FORTH THE LIGHT

CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor: Darkness—we who walk in darkness

People: have seen a great light:

Pastor: a light that is a joy for all the earth,

People: a light that announces new life.

Pastor: In joy we greet this light.

People: In this light we see that our savior has come.

Pastor: Celebrate the light that shines all around us.

People: We come to celebrate with joy and wonder.

CELEBRATION THROUGH ADORATION

*PROCESSIONAL

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

No. 240

**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 of True God, Light from Light eternal
Humbly, He entered the virgin’s womb
Son of the Father, 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, 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.**

Child, for us sinners
Poor and in the manger,
We would embrace thee
With love and awe.
Who would not love thee,
Loving us so dearly?
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 PRAYER

Gracious God, with joy and thanksgiving we gather as your people. We have come to hear again the timeless story of Christ's birth. In the excitement of this night, quiet our hearts that we may know the peace and fullness of this holy time. Shine, O Light, in the darkness of our world. Sing, O angels, in the stillness of our hearts, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those God favors." This we pray in the name of the Child of Bethlehem. Amen.

INTROIT

"On Christmas Night All Christians Sing"
Sussex Carol, arranged by Martha Lynn Thompson
Agape Publishing, Carol Stream

Bell Choir

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES AND THE CHRIST CANDLE

Pastor: The birth of Jesus was God's way of saying to humankind, "do not be afraid. For I am with you.

People: This is no ordinary night. This is not just the birth of a baby boy. This is God with us.

Pastor: This is God within us. This is God refusing to let darkness rule! Among the abuse of power, in the midst of pain and suffering, hope was conceived. Peace has given a birth cry. Joy blinks his eyes out on the world. Love has Come down this Christmas.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES AND THE CHRIST CANDLE

HYMN

"Christmas Eve"
(Tune: 'Away in a Manger')

Ann Freeman Price

*Now Christmas is near and we hallow this day
When truth is revealed and we follow his way.
We lift hands in prayer as we celebrate birth,
And angels still sing songs of peace to the earth.*

Pastor: Take a deep breath and know that God is as close to you as the air you breathe. We are never alone.

PRAYER

On this night of nights, O God, prepare our hearts for the coming of your light. As the lights of hope, peace, joy, love and the light of Christ burn brightly, we take a deep breath knowing you are as close to us as the air we breathe. We rejoice in knowing You are Emmanuel, God with us! Amen.

MINISTRY OF MUSIC

“Mary, Mary”
Donald W. Marsh and Richard K. Avery, Hope Publishing

Children’s Choir

CELEBRATION THROUGH PROCLAMATION

CHRISTMAS HOMILY

Pastor Shuluga

ANTHEM

“Still, Still, Still”
Austrian Carol. Arrangement Ruth Elaine Schram
Alfred Publishing Company, Inc.

Women’s Ensemble

CELEBRATION THROUGH THE WORD THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN WORD AND SONG

CALL TO REFLECTION

Pastor: In many and various ways God spoke to his people of old by prophets.

People: But now in these last days God has spoken to us by his Son.

Pastor: Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.

HYMN

“Angels We Have Heard on High”
**Come to Bethlehem and see Christ whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Glor-----ri-a, in ex-celsis De- o!
Glor----- ri-a, in ex-celsis De- o!**

No. 238, v. 3

A SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

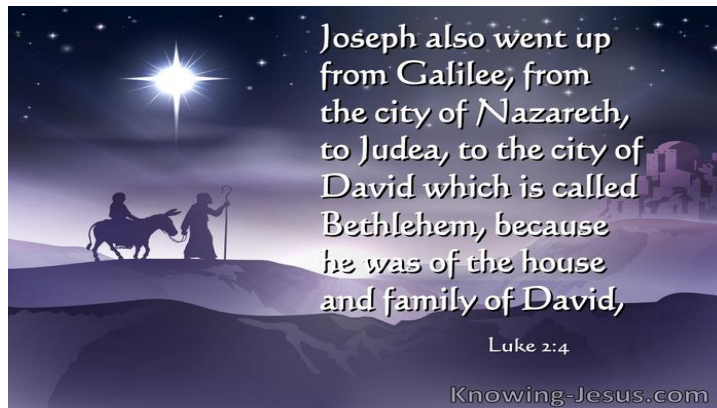
THE WORD FORETOLD



THE PROPHET FORETELLS JESUS’ BIRTH
Isaiah 9: 2-3, 6-7

**All Earth is waiting to see the Promised One,
And the open furrows, the sowing of the Lord,
All the world bound and struggling, seeks true liberty;
It cries out for justice and searches for the truth.**

THE WORD IS PRONOUNCED



A DECREE BY CEASAR AUGUSTUS GUIDES MARY AND JOSEPH TO BETHLEHEM
Luke 2: 1-6

*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 shin-eth the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to-night.*

THE WORD IS GIVEN



JESUS IS BORN IN A HUMBLE STABLE
Luke 2: 7

*What child is this who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherd's watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, 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 Christians fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe the son of Mary.*

THE WORD IS ANNOUNCED



THE SHEPHERDS HEAR THE MESSAGE OF THE ANGELS
Luke 2: 8-15

**The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor
shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold winters night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.**

THE WORD IS SPREAD ABROAD



THE SHEPHERDS FIND JESUS AS PROCLAIMED BY THE ANGELS
AND SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS
Luke 2: 16-18

HYMN

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

No. 238 V. 2

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heavenly song?
Glo-----ri-a, in ex-celsis De- o!
Glor----- ri-a, in ex-celsis De- o!

CELEBRATION THROUGH COMMITMENT OUR CHRISTMAS RESPONSE

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Come now and kneel before the Christ child. Bring all that you are and all that you have. Offer your gifts in wonder and surprise and awe. Offer your gifts in joy and delight.

THE LORD'S OFFERING

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

OFFERTORY DEDICATION (A Christmas Offering Hymn to the tune of 'It Came Upon the Midnight Clear)

***Our Christmas offering we present to you, oh newborn one!
Bless it, we pray, and all the love we have for you, God's Son.
Our world is deeply needing gifts that only you can bring,
Help us, your people, heal the world. That all your praise may sing. Amen.***

OFFERTORY PRAYER

There are so many things to be thankful for tonight, God. Receive these tokens of our gratitude for your love incarnate in the babe of Bethlehem. May they become God-with-us for all the world. May they breathe magic back into a world that needs a sense of wonder and joy.

CELEBRATING THE LIGHT

THE LIGHT OF CHRIST FILLS OUR HEARTS

Lesson of Light:

St. John 1:1-14

The pastor now gives light to the ushers; they in turn will give light to the first person in each pew. Each person shall pass the light to the next person. The lighted candle is never tilted, but always held upright when giving light to another. When all candles are lit the congregation shall rise and sing 'Silent Night.'



*HYMN

"Silent Night"

No. 239

*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 Al-le-lu-ia!
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, Al-le-lu-ia to our King
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.*

*LITANY OF LIGHT

Pastor: The People who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

People: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Pastor: Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has a light shined.

People: We have beheld Christ's glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

Pastor: For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given.

People: In him was life, and the life was the light of man.

Pastor: Jesus spoke saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) May the light of this child light your way forever.

*PRAYER FOR LIGHT

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake the brightness of his glory; through your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Please extinguish your candle by blowing it gently. Be sure to hold it upright until the wax hardens. Thank you.)

SENDING

*BENEDICTION

Pastor: As you prepare to go out into the world sing to the Lord a new song.

People: Joy to the World!

Pastor: Tell everyone about God's amazing miracle.

People: Joy to the World!

Pastor: A child has been born who is the Prince of Peace.

People: Joy to the World!

Pastor: The light of God's love shines throughout the universe.

People: Joy to the World!



*RECESSIONAL HYMN"

"Joy to the World"

No. 246

*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 world the Savior 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.*

*He rules the world 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.*

*POSTLUDE

Those who purchased poinsettias are welcome to take them home following the service.

Sunday, December 29
Combined worship service at 10:30 at Mifflin Avenue UMC. (Children's Pageant)

PRAYER REQUESTS

Mel (Robert) - (Barbara's brother) - prayers
People of Israel
Patti (Barbara friend) - prayers
Kim Viehland—prayers
People of Gaza & the West Bank
Judy Spencer Baker – prayers
Judy Arthurs – prayers
Those affected by tornadoes/hurricanes
Phyllis McLaughlin - prayers
Ginnie White – prayers
Big Mac (Barbara's friend) - brain cancer
Bud Wicks (South Avenue) - prayers
Hope Gaebel - prayers
Prayers for Pastor Russel
Prayers for the Shuluga Family
Chris Clapper (nephew of Ginnie & Sue) - complications from surgery
Those affected by violence
Middle East conflict
Morris's children
Those who need prayers and don't ask for prayers
People who are traveling
Those affected by COVID, RSV and the FLU
Gary White (Ginnie's son) - recovery from rotator cuff surgery
Aubrie (Ginnie's granddaughter) – diagnosed with breast cancer
Joe (Ginnie & Sue's cousin) - diagnosed with myeloma cancer
Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball
Rev. Paul Ritchey - Pittsburgh/Greensburg DS
People of Ukraine
Mifflin Avenue United Methodist Church
United Methodist Church