

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
CHRISTMAS MID-NIGHT WORSHIP

Rev. John R. Hanson
December 24, 2020, 11:00 p.m.

PRELUDE

J. Hanson, Musician

INTRODUCTION

On a long winter evening, we gather to proclaim the coming of the light. Isaiah announces that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Paul reminds us that the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all. In the familiar account of Christ's birth, the evening sky is bright with the heavenly host singing, "Glory to God in the highest." Amid our broken world we proclaim that the Prince of Peace is born among us. God comes to us in human flesh—in Christ's body and blood—so that we may be bearers of divine light to all the world.

VERSE AND INVITATION TO WORSHIP

The Lord said to me: You are my Son; this day have I begotten you. (Psalm 2:7)

Father, you make this holy night radiant with the splendor of Jesus Christ our light. We welcome him as Lord, the true light of the world. Bring us to eternal joy in the kingdom of heaven, where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

LITANY

Who will come to save us? Who will the Lord send to heal our wounds?

HYMN

"From Heaven Above"

Green # 51

From heav'n above to earth I come to bear good news to everyone!
Glad tidings of great joy I bring to all the world and gladly sing.

CCLI Song # 4205339 CCLI License # 1713417

But a child has no voice, no power, no influence. Why would God send a child?

HYMN

"From Heaven Above"

Green # 51

To you this night is born a child of Mary, chosen virgin mild;
This newborn child of lowly birth shall be the joy of all the earth.

A child needs to be loved and cared for. We need to pay attention to a child.

We need to reach out in love – after all, aren't we God's beloved ones?

The child is the blessed gift that God sends.

HYMN

"From Heaven Above"

Green # 51

Ah, dearest Jesus, holy child, make thee a bed soft, undefiled
Within my heart that it may be a quiet chamber kept for thee.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

This night we light Advent candles reminding us of God's promised peace on earth and that we are to live hope as we dispel the darkness around us; that we are to be constant in our relationships and in our living; and that following Jesus is a way of living righteousness, trust, and faithfulness.

Lord, we have watched for your coming with longing and with expectation, with patience and with hope. You come as a tiny, fragile baby, yet we know that you are God, and you are with us. May the flame of this candle remind us that you are the light of the world and that we can follow you and never walk in darkness but will have the true light of life.

THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS

HYMN

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Green # 41

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.

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may his coming; but, in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

CCLI Song # 27879 CCLI License # 1713417

A Story of Mary and Joseph - Matthew 1:18-21

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 with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss 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."

HYMN

"Silent Night"

Green # 65

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! 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.

CCLI Song # 27862 CCLI License # 1713417

Jesus' Birth: St. Luke 2:1-7

In those days, a decree went out from the Emperor 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 for them in the inn.

HYMN

"Hark ! The Herald Angels Sing"

Green # 60

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 angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

CCLI Song # 3074970 CCLI License # 1713417

Shepherds and Angels: St. Luke 2:8-14

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields keeping watch over their flocks 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 a 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, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

HYMN

"The First Noel"

Green # 56

The first Noel the angels did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay, keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.

They look-ed up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far;
And to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night.

CCLI Song # 31047 CCLI License # 1713417

A Star was their sign: St. Matthew 2:1-2,7-10

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him." Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." When they had heard the king, they went their

way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

HYMN

“Joy to the World”

Green # 39

Joy to the world , the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
Let ev’ry heart prepare him room and heav’n and nature sing,
And heav’n and nature sing, and heav’n, and heav’n and nature sing.

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.

CCLI Song No. 4194811 CCLI License No. 1713417

SERMON - “An Awfully Wonder-filled Night in a world beset by sin.” Mixed emotions and sloppy beginnings make this night - and so many others - a poor attempt at starting anew. How can we find the strength to make it real this time? How Lord? Teach us.

HYMN

“I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve”

COC # 26

I am so glad each Christmas eve, the night of Jesus’ birth;
Then like the sun the star shone forth and angels sang on earth.

The little child in Bethlehem, he was a king indeed!
For he came down from heaven above to help a world in need.

And so, I love each Christmas eve, and I love Jesus too;
And that he loves me every day, I know so well is true.

PRAYER

Lord God, at Christmas, we are mindful of the supreme gift that you gave us in a manger at Bethlehem. Humbly we offer our gifts of service and possessions in joyful thanksgiving for the love you have shown us. Accept these gifts for the sake of your son who was born to us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken

through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

SHARING OF THE PEACE

THE LIGHT OF CHRIST FILLS OUR HEARTS

*(As we pass the light to members of the congregation,
pass it to the person next to you. DO NOT TIP a lighted candle.)*

Lesson of Light: St. John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born not of blood or of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

HYMN

"Away in a Manger"

Green # 67

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
The stars in the 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 thee, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky and stay by my cradle 'til morning is nigh.

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

CCLI Song # 38583 CCLI License # 1713417

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

HYMN

"The Lord's Prayer"

Burgundy # 33

BLESSING AND PRAYER FOR COMMUNION

God of all creation, you have set before us your gift of salvation, which you have prepared for all peoples. You fill us with your goodness and peace. Use us that all might be satisfied with your abundance. This we ask through your only son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*(Please extinguish your candle and hold it upright as we sing the final hymn.
Kindly place it in the basket as you leave.)*

I heard the bells on Christmas Day, their old familiar carols play;
And wild and sweet the words repeat of peace of earth, good will to men.

I thought how, as the day had come, the belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along the unbroken song of Peace on earth, good will to men.

CCLI Song # 109663 CCLI License # 1713417

CLOSING PRAYER AND BENEDICTION:

Darkness floods our hearts. Not the darkness of longer and colder nights, but the darkness of doubt and despair. Inside we cry for peace and hope; but our outer actions proclaim fear and faithlessness. It is as though we are bound in grief waiting for the inevitable death of our spirits. The gloom is far too real, even during this time. Lord, send your light to us. Disperse and destroy this gloom that has invaded our hearts. Bring us to hope. Help us again prepare our hearts for love and peace. Amen.

The almighty and incarnate God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit bless us now and forever.
Amen.

SONG OF SIMEON:

Lord, now let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled. My own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to lighten the nations and the glory of your people Israel. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

POSTLUDE