



Christmas Eve

- SERVICE -

Centenary United Methodist Church

**2300 W. Friendly Ave.
Greensboro, NC 27403
December 24, 2020**

Rev. Kelley Groce, Pastor

Anita Trumpler-Rich, Music Director

Christmas Eve Communion and Candlelight

Welcome

Call to Worship:

Leader: Animals came to prepare your bed.

People: Come, Lord Jesus, Come!

Leader: Shepherds stood guard, marveled and said:

People: Come, Lord Jesus, Come!

Leader: Angels sang to calm your cries.

People: Come, Lord Jesus, Come!

Leader: And all the world gave one great sigh:

People: Ah, Lord Jesus, you have come!

All: Thanks be to God! Amen

Hymn of Praise..... *O Come All Ye Faithful* #234 v. 1&2

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;

Refrain

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,

lo, he shuns not the Virgin's womb;

Son of the Father, begotten, not created;

(Refrain)

Litany for Lighting of the Christ Candle on the Advent Wreath Jacob and Emily Lawing

Light the Christmas candles, now: Sing of

donkey, sheep, and cow; birthday candles

for the King, let the alleluias ring.

Refrain

Candle, candle, burning bright, shining

in the cold winter night; candle, candle,

burning bright, fill our hearts with Christmas light.

The Christmas Story: Luke 2:1-5

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.*

Luke 2:6-7

Away in a Manger

*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 side until morning is nigh.*

Luke 2: 8–14

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

*Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinner reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"*

Luke 2:15-20

The First Noel

*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 winter's night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.*

Matthew 2:1-11

We Three Kings

*We three kings of Orient are bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain following yonder star.
Oh, star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding guide us to thy Perfect Light.*

Service of Holy Communion

Invitation: Friends, tonight we remember and celebrate the birth of Christ, God who came to us in human flesh, as a helpless baby. Those first invited to witness this event were a group of poor shepherds. They were not highly educated. They had no gifts to bring. They did not have fancy clothes. But an angel proclaimed to them, "A Savior has been born to YOU." Tonight we come, as unworthy as those shepherds, to witness and receive God's amazing grace and love.

This table is Christ's table. It is not my table, or the United Methodist table, or the table of this congregation. It is the table of Jesus. And all who wish to know and love him are welcome here. Whether your faith is strong or wavering, whether you come to church often or have never been before, you are welcome here. Tonight, a Savior is born for YOU, and that same Savior welcomes you to this sacred meal.

Confession and Assurance of Pardon

When we allow darkness to overcome the light,

forgive us, Lord.

When we reduce Christmas to plastic and tinsel,

have mercy on us, Father.

When hardness of heart keeps us from seeing

and hearing and touching the needs of others,

let your grace consume us, O God.

When the wars around us are of no concern,

forgive us, Lord, and move us to compassion

for those who suffer.

When our caring is not extended to action,

move us to seek justice for our brothers and sisters.

We come to confess our sinfulness

before you and before each other.

Remove all barriers that divide us,

and let there be no obstacle to our love for you

and for one another. Amen.

All pray in silence.

People of God, through the coming of Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate, the Lord has comforted and redeemed us!

Recall the words of the angels: Good news...Great joy...All people...

In Christ we receive the salvation of our God. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Glory to God in the highest!

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

May the God of silent nights be with you!

May the God of herald angels be with you!

Open your hearts to the One born in the little town of Bethlehem.

May Emmanuel come to abide in our hearts.

Join all believers in singing of our joy this night.

May our voices blend with those of the angels and shepherds.

You crept into chaos so long ago,

Star-shaper,

so creation might be born:

sheep gathering on hillsides,

stars glittering in the night skies,

sea horses frolicking in warm waters.

Silently, you gathered up the dust,

shaping us in your image

as the Spirit breathed life into us.

All the gifts of your heart were for us,

but we slammed the door of our hearts,

saying there was no room for you in our lives.

Prophets came time and again,
scattering your clues throughout the Story,
but we were too busy enjoying
the sleights of hand done by sin and death.
When you saw we could not
understand the Mystery on our own,
you sent Jesus, to reveal everything to us.

As we gather with children dressed in bathrobes,
as we join with the voices around us,
we sing praises to you this Christmas night:

**We will not be afraid,
for great joy is ours this night;
we will look for the signs of your presence,
grace swaddled in hope,
love wrapped around broken hearts.**

**Glory to you, God in the highest heavens!
May peace fill the lives of all your children!**

Leaving your side, God of holiness,
your Child came to walk with us
through the cold streets of our lives.
Born in poverty's shadows,
he is the light which illumines
your heart for us.
Unwrapped from glory's embrace,
he gathers us from all the corners
of our confused choices to make us one with you.
Placed in a rude feeding trough
layered with our fears and doubts,
he breathes in your hopes
and lives your will, until
he is placed in death's cold embrace,
waiting in the silence,
where he breathes in resurrection's breath,
and brings forth life for all who follow.

On this night, when we sing of the baby in the manger,
as the shadow of the cross is cast by the stars,
we proclaim that mystery called incarnation:

**Christ is our light,
and we will join the angels in singing the good news;
Christ is our life,
and we will join the disciples in telling the Story;
Christ is our promise,
and we wait for the joy of his return.**

Here in the silence and the singing,
with children, carols, and candlelight,
we gather around the Table of joy,
as you pour out your Spirit upon
the most precious gifts of bread and cup.

As we feast upon the bread,
we remember a young pregnant girl,
and would serve those who are expecting,
those who cannot have a child,
those who have lost children.

As we drink from the cup,
we think of a worried father,
and would be with those who assemble toys this night,
as well as those who will work this night
to pay for food and medicine for their families.

As we are surrounded by family and friends,
we would care for
those whose closest companion is loneliness,
those separated from loved ones,
those who hear no music, joy, or hope in their lives.

And when all time and history becomes silence,
we will be gathered with our sisters and brothers
from Bethlehem and Belfast, from Cairo and Chicago,
from Cape Town and Istanbul, from Sydney and Shanghai,
from every corner and moment of every universe,
to join the angel choirs in forever singing your praises

as we dance to the Table of wonder and grace,
God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.

With the Confidence of the Children of God let us pray the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples

The Lord's Prayer

Breaking the Bread

Giving The Bread and Cup

Prayer Following Communion

God, thank you for this holy meal where Jesus invites us and joins us all together. Help us to live the way Jesus taught us to live. Help us to love you and love ourselves and love each other the way that you love us. Amen.

Service of Candle Lighting

Hymn.....Silent Night # 239 v.1&4

*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, wondrous star, lend thy light;
with the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!*

Blessing and Benediction:

Leader: Now, as you depart from this place and go out into the night, may you carry with you the promises of God, the blessing of the Christ Child, and the song of the Spirit:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth, peace, good will to all.”

People: Amen

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.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove^[1]_{SEP}
The glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love, and wonders, wonders of His love.*

Postlude