



December 24, 2024

Christmas Eve, 2024

7 pm Service



Prelude

Welcome/ Announcements

Call To Worship:

“Every Year” BY Dr. Christine Hong

My heart and I have an agreement.

Every year we show up here—

here in the sanctuary,

here with the candles and the tall ceilings, here

with the creaky church pews

and the songs of silent nights.

My heart and I have an agreement.

Every year we show up here—

at the end of the year,

after another 12 months

of humanity, of me trying to

keep it all together, trying to

keep my head above water, trying to

keep up appearances.

Every year we show up here.

We drop it all.

We leave it at the door.

We come into this space

and I could swear it feels different.

Maybe it’s God. Maybe it’s hope. Maybe it’s love.

But whatever it is,

I need it every year,

so we show up here.

Tell us again the story of tonight.

All our hearts need it.

HYMN #133

O Come, All Ye Faithful (V

1&4)

***And we begin, 700 years before the birth,
with the words of the Prophet Isaiah.***

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7.

*The people who walked in darkness have
seen a great light.*

*For those who lived in a land of deep shadows—light! sunbursts of light!
You repopulated the nation,
you expanded its joy.*

Oh, they're so glad in your presence!

Festival Joy!

*The joy of a great celebration,
sharing rich gifts and warm greetings.
The abuse of oppressors and cruelty of tyrants—
all their whips and clubs and curses—
Is gone, done away with, a deliverance
as surprising and sudden as Gideon's old victory
over Midian.*

*The boots of all those invading troops,
along with their shirts soaked with innocent
blood, Will be piled in a heap, and burned,
a fire that will burn for days!*

For a child has been born—for us!

The gift of a son—for us!

He'll take over the running of the world.

His names will be: Amazing Counselor,

Strong God, Eternal Father,

Prince of Wholeness.

*His ruling authority will grow,
and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he
brings.*

*He'll rule from the historic David throne
over that promised kingdom.*

*He'll put that kingdom on a firm footing
and keep it going*

*With fair dealing and right living,
beginning now and lasting always.*

*The zeal of God-of-the-Angel-Armies
will do all this.*

“Despite it All” By Steve Garnaas-Holmes

What's to love? She asked.

I understood the question.

*I've seen the riot gear, the tear gas, the names of
children wiped from this war-stained world.*

*I've seen the spray paint Swastikas
and the Proud Boys with their flags.*

*I've heard grandmothers at church pray in
urgent, desperate whispers.*

I've watched young mothers cry, because teachers carry guns.

I felt the tremor of an earthquake.

I've felt the heat of climate change.

I've seen the temple curtain tear in two.

*But despite it all, the bell that wouldn't stop tolling,
the words that won't stop clanging through my heart,*

are, so much.

There is so much left to love. So much left to hope for.

HYMN #88 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (V1,2&7)

THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE AND MARY'S CONSENT

Luke 1:26-38

26-28 *In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the virgin's name, Mary. Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her:*

Good morning!

*You're beautiful with God's beauty,
Beautiful inside and out!*

God be with you.

29-33 *She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus.*

He will be great,

be called 'Son of the Highest.'

The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David;

*He will rule Jacob's house forever—
no end, ever, to his kingdom."*

34 *Mary said to the angel, "But how? I've never slept with a man."*

35 *The angel answered,*

The Holy Spirit will come upon you,

the power of the Highest hover over you;

*Therefore, the child you bring to birth
will be called Holy, Son of God.*

36-38 *“And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months pregnant! Nothing, you see, is impossible with God.”*
And Mary said,
Yes, I see it all now:
I’m the Lord’s maid, ready to serve.
Let it be with me
just as you say.
Then the angel left her.

LEADER: This is God’s word of Peace.

PEOPLE: Christ comes to make all things new.

“At The Manger Mary Sings” by W.H. Auden

*O little boy, shut your bright eyes to all that mine
must endure with their watchfulness; protected by
its shade escape from my care:
For what can you discover from my tender look but
how to be afraid?
Love only confirms the more it would deny.
O little boy, close your bright eyes.*

Sleep.

*What have you learned from the womb that bore
you but an anxiety your Father cannot feel?*

Sleep.

*What will it do for you, the flesh and mother’s love I
gave you but tempt you from his will?*

Why was I chosen to teach his son to weep?

Little One, sleep.

Dream.

*In human dreams earth ascends to Heaven where
no one need pray nor ever feel alone.*

*In your first few hours of life here, have you Chosen
already what death must be your own?*

How soon will you start on the Sorrowful Way?

Dream while you may.

SPECIAL MUSIC: O Holy Night – The French Family

JESUS IS BORN

Luke 2:1-7

1-5 About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancé, who was pregnant.
6-7 While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

LEADER: This is God's word of Hope.

Christ Comes to make all things New.

"Hold it with both hands lightly"

By Rev. Michael Ozaki

*The baby bird fell down, down, down away from
the nest.*

*And there it cried, pattering about on the hard
and unforgiving ground below.*

*We children formed a curious circle, amazed at
how small and fragile its bobbing body
seemed to be*

*Wondering where it came from or might find
strength to go.*

Eventually a big kid came along to scoop it up.

Holding it tenderly in cradle cupped hands.

*She said, "You have to be gentle. You have to be
steady. You have to be patient. You have to be
brave. You have to let him grow, that's
how you trust that one day he can fly."*

When I think of hope now, I think of that bird.

*And how I'd rather hold it in my hands,
swaddled, with all it asks of me and be
wrong that stand around staring at the
unforgiving ground.*

Trust enough to let it grow and one day it will fly.

HYMN #119

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

THE ANNOUNCEMENT AND SHEPHERDS' RESPONSE

Luke 2:8-14

There were shepherds camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them, and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

13-14 *At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises:*

*Glory to God in the heavenly heights,
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.*

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherds talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherds were impressed.

19-20 *Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherds returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!*

Leader: This is God's word of Joy.

People: Christ Comes to make all things New.

"Don't forget it laugh: Holy & Unhindered"

by Rev. Sarah Speed

I am sure it is important to close your eyes, to pray on your knees, to fling yourself into deep reverence and even deeper humility. I am sure the Spirit is close when we dress up, when we sing the descant line, when we murmur the words with a sincere and hopeful heart.

And I am sure that when you moonwalk through your living room in soft wool socks, when you cackle loudly enough for the whole restaurant to hear, when you squeal into the phone and make pancakes for dinner, when you plunge your hands into dirt and talk to the sparrows, when you make a mess of Communion breadcrumbs all around the Table, or allow yourself an undone, unhindered, unpolished sort of joy—that the Spirit loves that just as well.

The angel said, “Do not be afraid; I am bringing you joy.”

We humans have spent a lot of time focusing on the fear. Don’t forget: God is also in the joy.

The Wise Men From The East Visit Bring Gifts

Matthew 2: 1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory—this was during Herod’s kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They asked around, “Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth. We’re on pilgrimage to worship him.”

When word of their inquiry got to Herod, he was terrified—and not Herod alone, but most of Jerusalem as well. Herod lost no time. He gathered all the high priests and religion scholars in the city together and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

They told him, “Bethlehem, Judah territory. The prophet Micah wrote it plainly:

It’s you, Bethlehem, in Judah’s land, no longer bringing up the rear. From you will come the leader who will shepherd-rule my people, my Israel.”

Herod then arranged a secret meeting with the scholars from the East. Pretending to be as devout as they were, he got them to tell him exactly when the birth-announcement star appeared. Then he told them the prophecy about Bethlehem, and said, "Go find this child. Leave no stone unturned. As soon as you find him, send word and I'll join you at once in your worship."

Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time!

They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh.

In a dream, they were warned not to report back to Herod. So they worked out another route, left the territory without being seen, and returned to their own country.

Leader: This is God's word of Love.

People: Christ Comes to make all things New

"Field Notes"

by Rev. Sarah Speed

*With tears in your eyes, you name all the bumps and zigzags your life has taken.
With clenched teeth and a hummingbird pulse, you wake up and wonder – how did I get here?
In the last 40 days of desert wandering, you say you haven't heard God's voice once.
You say you miss when God was close, when God used to sing the harmony line.
So you yell at the sky, begging God to drop a pin, in name the road, to draw you a map.
You lament the way this life isn't easy.*

You ask me – was the road ever straight and narrow, or was that all a lie?

But then you crest the mountain, and I don't hear from you for a while, because God was growing in the lilac field on the other side of the hill.

God was scattered among the pebbles of the road you never planned to take.

Isn't it amazing, you say, there are a million roads home and God walks every single one of them – With and waiting for me.

HYMN #136 "Go Tell It On The Mountain"

OFFERING

~All funds given will go towards the Care & Share Emergency Fund providing emergency aid towards housing, transportation, food and other needs for the most vulnerable in our community~

Jesus was not born in a real home.

He was born into poverty.

He was born into simplicity.

He was born into a manger in Bethlehem.

And despite the little he might have had; Jesus still spent the rest of his days on earth giving to others.

Generosity is in the DNA of our faith. We give what we can, not because we should or because scripture says to. We give because we're family. We give because we belong to one another. We give because all are invited into God's house. So let us give our tithes and our offerings now.

HYMN #115 "Away In A Manger"

The King's Response

Matthew 2: 6-18

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

*"A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;*

*she refused to be consoled,
because they are no more."*

Leader: Because the light still shined in the darkness,
People: And the darkness has not overcome it.

"Refugee"

By Malcolm Guite

*We think of him as safe beneath the steeple, or
cozy in a crib beside the font, but he is with a
million displaced people on the long road of
weariness and want.*

*For even as we sing our final carol his family is up
and on that road, fleeing the rath of someone else's
quarrel, glancing behind and shouldering their load.
Whilst Herod rages still from his dark tower Christ
clings to Mary, fingers tightly curled, the lambs are
slaughtered by the men of power, and death
squads spread their curse across the world.
But every Herod dies and comes alone to stand
before the Lamb upon the throne.*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*God of shepherds and angels,
God of starlight and seekers,
God of mangers and unwed teenage
mothers: It is almost Christmas.*

*It feels like we have been waiting so long for
this night.*

*Amidst the hustle and bustle of this busy
season, we have been waiting for a quiet, a
calm, a stillness. We have been waiting for
good news that changes us and for the
undeniable sense that you are near.*

*So in this moment, surrounded by
community, in the presence of candlelight
and hallelujahs, we bow our heads and give
thanks:*

*Thank you, God, for the places and people
that feel like home.*

*Thank you for the hope on the horizon which
carries us through.*

*Thank you for moments of worship that
break open our hearts.*

*Thank you for the joy of children on this
night, which reminds us of love. And thank*

you for the stars in the sky which remind us of you.

We have so much to be grateful for.

However, even amidst our prayers of gratitude and joy, we also bring you prayers of concern. For when the music is quiet and the clouds clear, we can finally hear our own thoughts and see sky above us, and that is when there is enough space for hurt to float to the surface. So many of us are still seeking, still looking for a place to belong, still searching for a faith that feels like home.

We are closer to home, but we're not there yet.

We are only truly home when we are with you.

So God of starlight and angel choruses, on this Christmas Eve, as you come dwell among us, we pray that you would bring us close. Scoop us up. Draw us in. Hold our hands as we walk through the dark towards the fullness of your kingdom, which started here at Christmas.

And together, with hope in our hearts, we pray the prayer your son taught us to pray, saying...

MUSIC

Hazel Mendez

HYMN #122

"Silent Night" Verse 1

****CANDLE LIGHTING LITANY**

A: In God's house, we are still **Hoping**—
For God loves us too much to leave us just as we are.

B: In God's house, we still have **Faith**—
Because we still hold the promise of all that could be.

A: In God's house, we are still **Joyful**—
For all that separates us from God falls away.

B: In God's house, we are still **Loving**—
Because we follow the one who gave all for
us.

A: And at the center of it all is the One who
came to earth to live, to die, to rise again.

B: And Jesus' spoke to them, saying, "I am
the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will never walk in
darkness but have the light of life."

May you receive Christ's light like this
candle, shared through your siblings in
Christ. Receive and share it with those
around you. And let us sing together to the
glory of our newborn King!

HYMN #122

"Silent Night"
vs. 2-4 (Acapella)

HYMN #134

"Joy To The World"
(Please raise your candles up as you sing)

BENEDICTION

In darkness we arrived. In light we now leave.
Though once we stumbled, we now walk in
"The Way"
So, go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.



Christmas Poinsettias



Given by: In Honor or Memory of:

Mario & Jill Schisano (3)

In Memory of Frank & Betty Janecky

In Memory of Julie Janecky Pries

In Memory of Antonino & Maria Schisano

Jeri Melsa & Family

In memory of Cleon Melsa

Marlys Mjoen & Family

In memory of Bruce Mjoen

Beverly Pester Bergman (4)

In memory of Harlan, Erin, Edward & Vera Pester

Donald Hirsh (2)

In memory of Stanton Allen Hirsh

In memory of Sally Hirsh

Marley Melbye

In memory of Alton & Lois Fevig

Marlys & Glen Finkenbinder

In memory of Ralph & Mariam Finkenbinder

Gary & Lori Hoerner and family

*In memory of Bill & Norma Hoerner and
Duane Coauette*

Morgan Family (2)

In memory of Walter & Mae Morgan

Sandy, Matthew & Eric Perkins (2)

In memory of Jim Perkins

In memory of parents/grandparents:

*Arlo & Lillian Gould and Leland & Betty
Perkins*

Christmas Poinsettias

Given by: In Honor or Memory of:

Bruce & Jody Hanson

In memory of Rosalind Drake

Marsha Odom

*In memory of my parents: Tressa & Marshall
Newsom*

*You may take your Poinsettia home after the
service or perhaps bring it to a loved one who
may enjoy it! Christ's Peace to you.*

**Wishing you the blessings of Christ this
Christmas**

*May the love and light of Christ continue to
shine in your lives!*



Merry Christmas!