Christmas Eve Celebration

Candlelight Service: 11:00 pm

December 24, 2020

**Prelude**

**Greeting**

L: Merry Christmas! Christ is born!

**P: Merry Christmas! Hope has come to the world!**

**\*Opening Carol** O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

**Lighting the Christ Candle (Dodge Family)**

**Reader 1:**
We light the first Advent Candle: the candle of watching and waiting for we have searched and waited for our Savior to come to us.
**Reader 2:**We light the second Advent Candle: the candle of preparation as we have prepared our hearts to receive the Savior.
**Reader 1:**
We light the third Advent Candle: the candle of beholding and believing because we have seen the mighty power and love of God in our lives.
**Reader 2:**
We light the fourth Advent Candle: the candle of rejoicing because we have been blessed with the good news of God’s love for all God’s people!
**Reader 3:**
Now the time is near! The One who will save us, brings God’s light into our world. We light this Christ Candle in celebration of God’s most precious gift to us - our Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN.

**\*Opening Prayer**

Glorious God, who presents us with the most precious of gifts, we praise you for all your blessings in our lives. Tonight we have come to this place, in the midst of a busy time. We might not even have everything ready at home, yet we have come, because we ourselves need to be ready. Work in our hearts this night, preparing us for your presence. Work in our lives that we may reach out to others in comfort and compassion; work in our world that the darkness that has encompassed it may be dispelled by the brightness of your love and your Gift. In faith and expectation, we pray. AMEN.

**Christmas Music** O Holy Night Owen Lovejoy

**Scripture Luke 2:1-7**

**2** In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3All went to their own towns to be registered. 4Joseph 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. 5He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7And 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.

**\*Carol** It Came Upon A Midnight Clear

**Christmas Prayer**

Lord of Light and Hope, our minutes and hours have been swallowed up in preparation for this night and for the coming day. We have been so caught up in the preparations for gatherings and gifting that we have pushed aside the wonder of what you have done for all Creation. Forgive us when we so easily get entangled in our own plans and forget to pay attention to the true event. Help us to relax and listen, instead of rush and shout. May the songs of the angels, the surprise of the shepherds, and the joy of the Holy Family become part of our preparations and our lives. Open our ears, our eyes, our hearts and our spirits to again hear the old, old story, spoken by new voices in new ways. Remind us again of your never-changing love for us. Prepare us to serve you by serving others. This night we offer this prayer of our hearts to you, gracious God. AMEN.

**The Christmas Story Luke 2:8-14**

8In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” 13And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

**\*Carol** Angels from the Realms of Glory

**Special Music** Jesu Bambino Robyn Frey-Monell

**Christmas Prayer**

It’s Christmas Eve again, God. We’re barely ready for it. So much to do to get ready—gifts to buy and wrap, parties to attend, trees to trim, houses to decorate. We’re in a whirlwind of activity. In the midst of the busyness we sometimes miss what it is all about— you coming to earth—Emmanuel—God-with-us. Help us hear anew your promises of hope and salvation and love as we sing our familiar carols. Forgive us for forgetting the magic of this night, for focusing on ourselves and what we need to do instead of on the miracle of Jesus’ birth. Rock us out of our complacency.
Let us hear angel voices, see shepherds hurrying to a stable, feel the baby’s soft breath on our cheeks, and ponder in our hearts what all this means for the world, for us.

**The Christmas Story Luke 2:15-20**

15When 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.” 16So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**Christmas Homily** Pastor Doug Dickson

**Special Music** Midnight Noel Tim Cervenka

**Christmas Prayer**

**God of bright and shining stars, we come this evening with the reminiscences of the old, old story in our hearts. For many here, the story has been heard numerous times, flooding their lives with warmth and love; For others the story is new, surprising, causing wonder and surprise. All around us are symbols and reminders of the miraculous Birth. We see the greens which remind us of your eternal presence and love for us. The candles shed their glowing light helping us to remember the many ways in which you have brightened our lives and offered light to our journey. The colors, the music, and aromas, the people, invite us again into your wonderful presence in the world in the birth of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.**

**In this world in which your holy land is in such turmoil, shed your light anew, that your healing Love may bring Peace and Hope to people in conflict. We ask that you protect all those who are in harm’s way; all those who live lives of anguish, poverty, oppression. We ask your loving presence to be with those who refuse to believe in you; who see your word through the church as a tradition, but see very little impact in their daily lives. Let the Light of Jesus Christ penetrate that darkness of alienation and bring Hope and Peace to all your people.**

**May the light of the stars which sparkled in those dark skies, again illuminate our lives, guiding, healing, leading us to you, Blessed God.. As we gather in this time and place, hearing the story of the birth, remind us again that you are born continually in our lives. In gratitude we offer our praise and our love to you. AMEN.**

**\*Closing Carol** Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Joy to the World

**\*Benediction**

**Silent Night Candlelight Service** Silent Night