

# **Barre Congregational Church United Church of Christ**



*Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church, Bethlehem, 2023  
Photo by the Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac*

**Christmas Eve  
December 24, 2025  
6:00 PM**

# PRELUDE "What Child Is This?"

Arr. Richard Purvis

## WELCOME & BIDDING PRAYER

## HYMN

BIRTH AND BAPTISM

### Once in Royal David's City 250

1. Once in roy - al Da-vid's cit - y stood a low - ly cat - tle  
 2. He came down to earth from heav - en who is God and Lord of  
 3. Je - sus is our child-hood's pat-tern; day by day, like us he  
 4. And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re-deem-ing

shed, where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a  
 all, and his shel - ter was a sta - ble, and his  
 grew; he was lit - tle, weak, and help - less, tears and  
 love; for that child so dear and gen - tle is our

man - ger for his bed; Ma - ry, lov - ing moth - er  
 cra - dle was a stall. With the poor, the scorned, the  
 smiles like us he knew; and he feel - eth for our  
 Lord in heaven a - bove; and he leads his chil - dren

mild, Je - sus Christ, her lit - tle child.  
 low - ly lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.  
 sad - ness, and he shar - eth in our glad - ness.  
 on to the place where he is gone.

WORDS: Cecil Frances Alexander, 1848 (Lk. 2:7)  
 MUSIC: Henry J. Gauntlett, 1849

IRBY  
 87.87.77

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION (UNISON)

**Almighty God, our eternal Creator,  
you are merciful and kind,  
but we have gone our own way,  
not loving you as we ought,  
nor loving our neighbors as ourselves.  
We have sinned against you in thought, word and deed  
and in what we have failed to do.  
Creator, forgive us.  
Help us to love you and our neighbor,  
and to live for your honor and glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whom alone we find  
salvation. Amen.**

## ASSURANCE OF GRACE

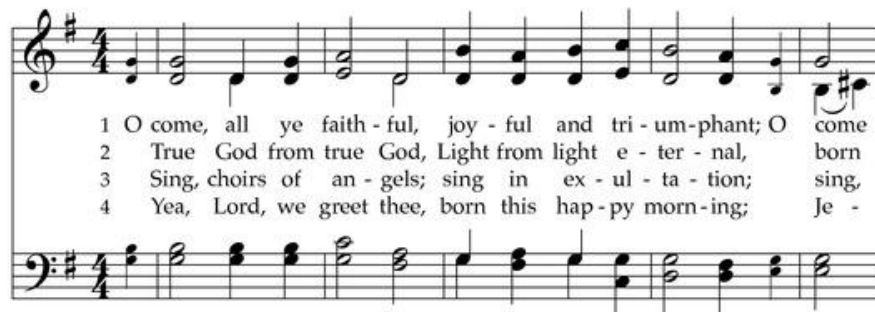


# OPENING CAROL


v. 1 & 4

JESUS CHRIST: BIRTH

## O Come, All Ye Faithful 133



1 O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant; O come  
 2 True God from true God, Light from light e - ter - nal, born  
 3 Sing, choirs of an - gels; sing in ex - ul - ta - tion; sing,  
 4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py morn - ing; Je -



ye; O come ye to Beth - le - hem! Come, and be - hold him,  
 of a vir - gin, a mor - tal he comes; ver - y God, be -  
 all ye cit - i - zens of heaven a - bove! Glo - ry to God, all  
 sus, to thee be all glo - ry given; Word of the Fa - ther,

*Refrain*



born the King of an - gels!  
 got - ten, not cre - at - ed! O come, let us a - dore him; O come, let  
 glo - ry in the high - est!  
 now in flesh ap - pear - ing!



us a - dore him; O come, let us a - dore him, Christ, the Lord!

From its Roman Catholic origins, this 18th-century hymn has spread to worldwide use by many denominations in both Latin and vernacular versions. Once popular with a wide range of hymn texts, this tune is now firmly associated with this Christmas text from which it is named.

TEXT: John Francis Wade, c. 1743; trans. Frederick Oakeley, 1841, alt.  
 MUSIC: John Francis Wade, c. 1743; harm. *The English Hymnal*, 1906

ADESTE FIDELES  
 Irregular

## FIRST LESSON

## GENESIS 1: 1 – 5

### *The Beginning of Creation*

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, **2** the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. **3** Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.



THE CREATION OF LIGHT  
And the earth was without form, and void . . . (Genesis 1: 2) (1: 3)

# CAROL

JESUS CHRIST: BIRTH

## 130 Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light

Break forth, O beau-teous heav-en-ly light, and ush-er in the

morn-ing. You shep-herds, shud-der not with fright, but hear the

an-gel's warn-ing. This child, now weak in in-fan-cy, our

con-fi-dence and joy shall be, the power of Sa-tan

break-ing, our peace e-ter-nal mak-ing.

This exuberant text, based on Isaiah 9:2-7, was the ninth of twelve stanzas in its original German hymn. The chorale tune associated with this hymn went through many changes at the hands of later composers, reaching its present form in J. S. Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*.

TEXT: Johann Rist, 1641; trans. John Troutbeck, 1873  
MUSIC: Johann Schop, 1641; harm. Johann Sebastian Bach, 1734

ERMUNTRE DICH  
8.7.8.7.8.8.7.7

## SECOND LESSON

Isaiah 9: 2 – 7

### *The Light Foretold*

<sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.

<sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.

<sup>4</sup> For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

<sup>5</sup> For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup> For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup> His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onwards and for evermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

# CAROL

v. 1 & 2

JESUS CHRIST: BIRTH

## Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming 129

1 Lo, how a rose e'er bloom-ing from ten - der stem hath sprung,  
 2 I - sa - iah 'twas fore - told it, the rose I have in mind;  
 3 This flower, whose fra-grance ten - der with sweet-ness fills the air,

of Jes - se's lin - eage com - ing, by faith - ful proph - ets sung.  
 with Mar - y we be - hold it, the vir - gin moth - er kind.  
 dis - pels with glo - rious splen - dor the dark-ness ev - ery-where.

It came, a flower - et bright, a - mid the cold of  
 To show God's love a - right she bore for us a  
 En - fleshed, yet ver - y God, from sin and death he

win - ter, when half spent was the night.  
 Sav - ior, when half spent was the night.  
 saves us and light - ens ev - ery load.

Although the early copies of this 15th-century German text include many more stanzas than are printed here, this simpler, shorter form has much to commend it. This early 17th-century harmonization of the traditional chorale melody invites and rewards singing in parts.

TEXT: German carol; stanzas 1, 2 trans. Theodore Baker, 1894, alt.; stanza 3 trans. Harriet Knuth Spaeth, 1985, alt.  
 MUSIC: *Alte Catholische Geistliche Kirchengesäng*, 1599; arr. Michael Praetorius, 1609

ES IST EIN' ROS'  
 7.6.7.6.6.7.6

## THIRD LESSON

Micah 5: 2 – 5a

### *A Ruler from Bethlehem*

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to rule in Israel,  
whose origin is from of old,  
from ancient days.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is  
in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall  
return to the people of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the  
Lord,

in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.  
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great  
to the ends of the earth;

<sup>5</sup> and he shall be the one of peace.



JESUS CHRIST: BIRTH

## 121 O Little Town of Bethlehem

1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!  
 2 For Christ is born of Mar - y and, gath - ered all a - bove,  
 3 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly, the won - drous gift is given!  
 4 O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;

A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by.  
 while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - dering love.  
 So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heaven.  
 cast out our sin and en - ter in; be born in us to - day.

Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing light;  
 O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth,  
 No ear may hear his com - ing, but in this world of sin,  
 We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad ti - dings tell;

the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.  
 and prais - es sing to God the king, and peace to all on earth.  
 where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.  
 O come to us; a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el!

Though he was famed during his lifetime as a great preacher, no sermon Phillips Brooks ever preached has been heard or read by as many people as have sung this carol he wrote in December 1868 for the Sunday School children of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Philadelphia.

TEXT: Phillips Brooks, 1868  
 MUSIC: Lewis Henry Redner, 1868

ST. LOUIS  
 8.6.8.6.7.6.8.6  
 (alternate tune: FOREST GREEN)

## FOURTH LESSON

Luke 1: 26 – 33, 46 – 55

### *Mary's Song of Praise*

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.' <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

And Mary said,

'My soul magnifies the Lord,

<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, <sup>48</sup> for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. <sup>50</sup> His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. <sup>52</sup> He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; <sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. <sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, <sup>55</sup> according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.'

**ANTHEM            “Were You There On Christmas Night?”**  
**by Natalie Sleeth**

**FIFTH LESSON**

**Matthew 1: 18 – 25**

*Joseph’s Dream*

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. <sup>19</sup>Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’

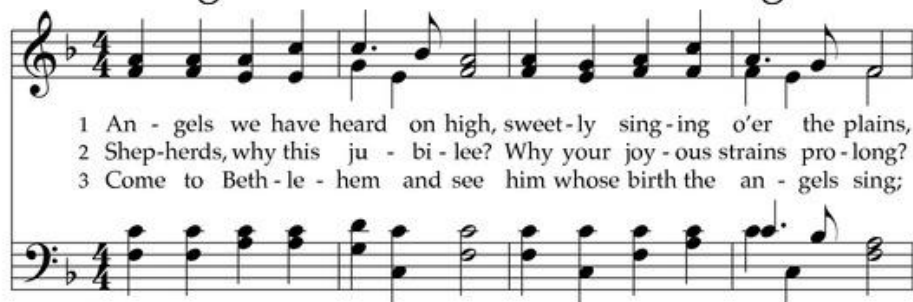


# CAROL

v. 1 & 4

JESUS CHRIST: BIRTH

## 113 Angels We Have Heard on High



1 An - gels we have heard on high, sweet-ly sing-ing o'er the plains,  
 2 Shep-herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous strains pro-long?  
 3 Come to Beth - le - hem and see him whose birth the an - gels sing;



and the moun-tains in re - ply ech - o - ing their joy - ous strains.  
 What the glad - some ti - dings be which in-spire your heaven-ly song?  
 come, a - dore on bend - ed knee Christ, the Lord, the new - born King.

*Refrain*



Glo - ri - a



in ex - cel - sis De - o! Glo -

This French carol probably dates from the 1700s, though it was not printed until the following century. Because it uses a vernacular language for the narrative stanzas and Latin for the refrain, it belongs to a special category called "macaronic" or mixed-language texts.

TEXT: French carol; trans. James Chadwick, 1860, alt.

MUSIC: French carol; arr. Edward Shippen Barnes, 1937

Music © 1937, ren. 1965 H. Augustine Smith Jr.

(admin. Fleming H. Revell Company, a div. of Baker Publishing Group)

GLORIA

7.7.7.7 with refrain

## SIXTH LESSON

Luke 2: 1 – 7

### *The Birth of Jesus*

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



## CAROL

v. 1 &amp; 2

## 123 From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

LM

Vom Himmel hoch, da komm' ich her  
M. Luther, 1483-1546  
Tr. C. Winkworth, 1827-78, *alt.*

VOM HIMMEL HOCH  
M. Luther, 1483-1546  
Setting: M. Praetorius, 1571-1621

The musical score is written for two voices (Soprano and Bass) and piano accompaniment. It features a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The melody is simple and hymn-like, with the piano accompaniment providing a steady harmonic support. The lyrics are printed below the vocal staves.

1. "From heav'n a - bove to earth I come To bear good news to ev - 'ry home;  
2. "To you this night is born a Child Of Mar - y, cho - sen Vir - gin mild;  
3. 'Tis Christ, our God, who far on high Hath heard your sad and bit - ter cry;  
4. "He brings those bless - ings, long a - go Pre - pared by God for all be - low,  
5. "These are the to - kens ye shall mark: The swad - dling - clothes and man - ger dark.

Glad ti - dings of great joy I bring, Where - of I now will say and sing:  
This lit - tle Child, of low - ly birth, Shall be the joy of all the earth.  
Him - self will your sal - va - tion be, Him - self from sin will make you free.  
Hence - forth His king - dom o - pen stands To you, as to the an - gel bands.  
There ye shall find the In - fant laid By whom the heav'ns and earth were made."

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 6. Now let us all with gladsome cheer<br>Follow the shepherds and draw near<br>To see this wondrous gift of God,<br>Who hath His only Son bestowed.            | 11. For velvets soft and silken stuff<br>Thou hast but hay and straw so rough,<br>Whereon Thou, King, so rich and great,<br>As 'twere Thy heav'n, art throned in state.   |
| 7. Give heed, my heart, lift up thine eyes!<br>Who is it in yon manger lies?<br>Who is this Child, so young and fair?<br>The blessed Christ-child lieth there. | 12. Thus hath it pleased Thee to make plain<br>The truth to sinners poor and vain,<br>That this world's honor, wealth and might<br>Are naught and worthless in Thy sight. |
| 8. Welcome to earth, Thou noble Guest,<br>Through whom the sinful world is blest!<br>Thou com'st to share our misery;<br>What can we render, Lord, to Thee!    | 13. Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,<br>Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,<br>Within my heart, that it may be<br>A quiet chamber kept for Thee.                              |
| 9. Ah, Lord, who hast created all,<br>How weak art Thou, how poor and small,<br>That Thou dost choose Thine infant bed<br>Where ass and ox but lately fed!     | 14. My heart for very joy doth leap;<br>My lips no more can silence keep.<br>I, too, must sing with joyful tongue<br>That sweetest ancient cradle-song:                   |
| 10. Were earth a thousand times as fair,<br>Beset with gold and jewels rare,<br>It yet were far too poor to be<br>A narrow cradle, Lord, for Thee.             | 15. Glory to God in highest heav'n,<br>Who unto us His Son hath giv'n!<br>While angels sing with pious mirth<br>A glad new year to all the earth.                         |

CHRISTMAS

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

## SEVENTH LESSON

Luke 2: 8 – 20

### *The Shepherds and the Angels*

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

<sup>14</sup> ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace among those whom he favors!’ <sup>15</sup> When 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.’ <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

## THE RINGING OF THE CHURCH BELL



# CAROL

v. 1 – 3

JESUS CHRIST: BIRTH

## Joy to the World

143

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -  
 2. Joy to the world, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their  
 3. He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the

ceive her King; let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room,  
 songs em - ploy; while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
 na - tions prove the glo - ries of his right - eous - ness,

and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture  
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing  
 and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his

And heaven and na - ture sing, and  
 Re - peat the sound - ing joy, re -  
 And won - ders of his love, and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.  
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.  
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heaven and na - ture sing,  
 peat the sound - ing joy,  
 won - ders of his love,

WORDS: Isaac Watts, 1719

MUSIC: Attr. George Frederick Handel, 1741; arr. Lowell Mason, 1848

ANTIOCH  
 CM w. repeat

SERMON

“The Baby”

ANTHEM

“Peaceful Night, Starlit Night”  
by Elliott Levine

OFFERING OUR GIFTS TO THE CHRIST

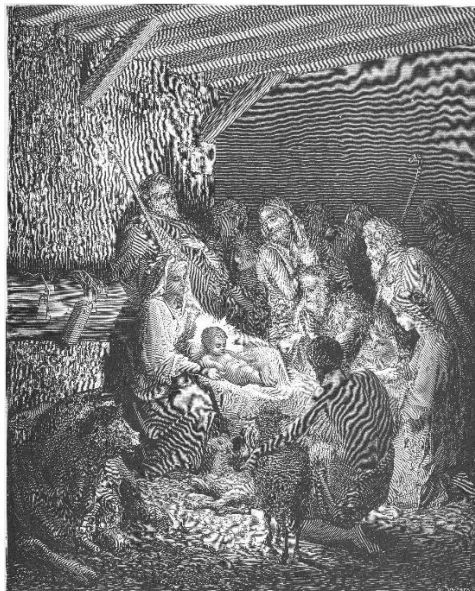
OFFERTORY

“O Holy Night” by Adolphe Adam

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (Unison)

**Christmas - Giving God, thank you for these gifts that we have the privilege of sharing on this night. May they resemble your goodness in the lives of those reached by these gifts. Bless every cent, dollar, minute, hour, skill, talent, mind, and body generously and freely offered to you, God of the manger. Amen.**

DISTRIBUTION OF LIGHT



THE NATIVITY  
And they came with babies, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger... (Luke 2:16)

# CAROL

v. 1 – 3

The minister will sing the first verse in German; the congregation will join on the following verses.

CHRISTMAS

281

## Silent Night, Holy Night!

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!



Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht! Al - les schläft,  
 1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm,  
 2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake  
 3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God,



ein - sam wacht nur das trau - te, hoch - hei - li - ge Paar.  
 all is bright round yon vir - gin moth - er and child.  
 at the sight; glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,  
 love's pure light ra - diant beams from your ho - ly face,



Hol - der Kna - be im lok - ki - gen Haar, schlaf in himm - li - scher  
 Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav - en - ly  
 heav'n - ly hosts . . . sing, al - le - lu - ia! Christ, the Sav - ior, is  
 with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at your



Ruh, schlaf in himm - li - scher Ruh.  
 peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.  
 born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!  
 birth, Je - sus, Lord, at your birth.

Text: Joseph Mohr, 1792–1849; tr. John F. Young, 1820–1885  
 Music: Franz Gruber, 1787–1863

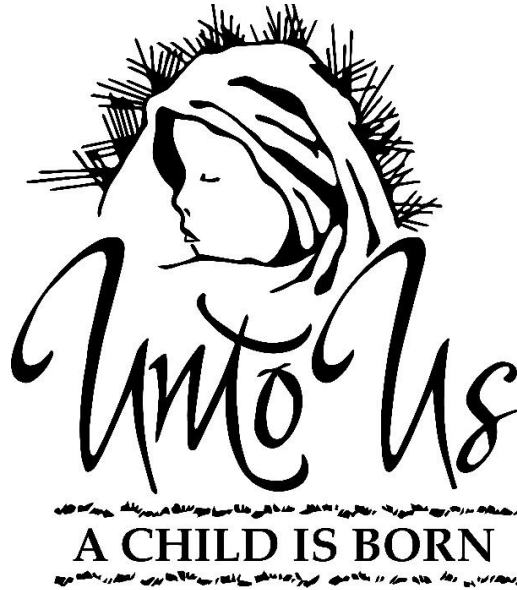
STILLE NACHT  
 Irregular

**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE**

**“The Sussex Carol”**

**Traditional**



**Participating in this Service**

**Lectors**

**Tim Barre  
Bonita Cortese  
Cathy James  
Peter James  
Bev Thomas**

**Choir**

**Tim Barre  
Karen Campbell-Nelson  
Darlene Clark  
Bonita Cortese  
Peter James  
Nancy O'Leary  
Linda Rodriguez  
Bev Thomas**

**Music Director**

**Eric Tuper-Giles**

**Pastor**

**The Rev. James Semmelroth Darnell**