

December 28, 2025 + 10:30 A.M.
First Sunday of Christmas
We Join in Worship
Liturgist: Vimary Couvertier Cruz

PRELUDE

In the Bleak Midwinter

Allen Orton Gibbs

WELCOME

***THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

CALL TO WORSHIP (Adapted from *Psalm 148*)

Leader: Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise the LORD in the heights!

ALL: Praise the LORD, all the angels; praise the LORD, all the host! Praise the LORD, sun and moon; praise the LORD, all you shining stars!

Leader: Praise the LORD, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the LORD, for the LORD commanded and they were created.

ALL: The LORD established them forever and ever; the LORD fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed. Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling the LORD's command!

Leader: Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!

ALL: Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! Young men and women alike, old and young together!

Leader: Let them praise the name of the LORD, for the LORD's name alone is exalted; the LORD's glory is above earth and heaven.

ALL: The LORD has raised up a horn for the people, praise for all the faithful. Let us praise the LORD!

***OPENING HYMN:** "Joy to the World"

INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

Leader: The author of *Galatians* writes, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children." Together let us confess how we have continued to labor under the weight of the law rather than accept redemption.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

God of new creation, hear us as we pray. We confess that at this time of year we often look back and allow guilt and regret to fill our vision. We get stuck on our mistakes and failures. We tell ourselves that we could have done better, that we did not do enough, that *we* were not enough. We look forward to a new year with hope, but we do not give ourselves grace when we look backwards. Forgive us, God, for allowing guilt to rule the day. Forgive us for not acknowledging the forgiveness that you have promised us. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

KYRIE: No. 572 (unison)

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Friends, hear the good news! Jesus redeems those who are under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

ALL: **Through Jesus Christ, the incarnation of love, we are forgiven! Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!**

GLORIA PATRI No. 579 (unison)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

STATEMENT OF FAITH (from *The Westminster Confession of Faith*)

Leader: The Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him human nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof; yet without sin: being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance.

ALL: **So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and humanity, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very human, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and humanity.**

We Hear God's Word

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

O God, Lover of humanity, Joy of creation—pour out your Spirit on us that we may hear your ancient words in a new key. Inspire us to sing your praise in every land and with every generation, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

HEBREW BIBLE LESSON: *Isaiah 61:10-62:3*

EPISTLE LESSON: *Colossians 3:12-17*

GOSPEL LESSON: *Luke 2:21-38*

SERMON: What's in a Name?

MUSICAL MEDITATION: *Children, Go Tell It on the Mountain*

James M. Martin

We Respond in Faith

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERING INVITATION:

Leader: We are still in the Christmas season. This is the season of giving. May we give our tithes and offerings with glad hearts and generosity! Please mail in your checks or use our online giving option. Now let us take a moment to reflect on stewardship as we hear the offertory.

OFFERTORY*Still, Still, Still*

Paul Manz

DOXOLOGY No. #591*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.****Praise God, all creatures here below.****Praise God, above, ye heavenly host.****Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*****PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (Unison)**

O God, when we give we do so in the name of Jesus Christ. His is the name above all names. We dedicate these gifts to you with a commitment to use them in the service of his mission. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

We Go Into the World

*** CLOSING HYMN: "Go, Tell It on the Mountain"**

BENEDICTION**POSTLUDE***Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

Harold DeCou

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* So that we can properly greet people who come to the building during Sunday morning worship, Door A will be the only unlocked external door during the worship service.

The *Cuetlaxochitl* Flowers (Poinsettias) in the Chancel today are given to the Glory of God by:

Fred & Carol Callaway, in memory of Loved Ones

Peter & Gale Churitch, in memory of Loved Ones

Lois Fozkos, in memory of Loved Ones

Rodney & Peggy Fozkos, in memory of Loved Ones

Marvin Kohler, in memory of Helen Kohler

Shirley McKnight, in memory of her husband, Barry McKnight

Julia McStravog, in memory of Grahamantha

Melissa Melendez, in memory of Mary, Gloria, Cassy and Jackie

Marjean Reed, in memory of Dr. Ronald R. Reed; Reed & Maxwell Families

Tyler Orem & Vima Couvertier Cruz, in memory of Grandma Virginia, Sergio Centeno, Titi Isabel,

Pappy Jamie, Aunt Teresa, and Esther Chishala

Jean Smith, in memory of Jay Smith and Bob & Arlene Diekman

Cheryl Steen, in memory of Dr. Lowell H. Steen and Laura Wisner

In Lieu of Flowers:

Shirley McKnight, in memory of her husband, Barry McKnight

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE** Our *Christmas Eve* candlelight service will be Wednesday, December 24th, at 7:00 PM in person and online. Our *First Sunday of Christmas* worship will be Sunday, December 28th, at 10:30 AM online only.
- **The choir chairs are FINISHED!** They are the culmination of a decades-long held dream of choir members, many of whom have joined the Heavenly Chorus and were part of the desire to have the chairs either replaced or reupholstered. We are joyously accepting donations to the Choir Chair Fund from anyone and everyone who wants to make a contribution in honor of or in memory of a cherished person in their lives who loves/loved music.
- **"BYOB"** (Bring Your Own Bible) discussion group meets on Wednesday evenings from 7-8 pm online using Zoom. Each week this group takes a look at the scriptures from our Sunday worship services, asking questions, bringing up different perspectives, and hopefully encountering the Holy Spirit in a fresh way. The link for the Zoom meetings is emailed out weekly. You can connect to Zoom with a smart phone, tablet or computer. If you're not familiar with how to use Zoom, or to get on our e-mail list, please contact Pastor Tyler or Heather Casiano. BYOB will resume January 7!
- **"THE BIBLE IN TODAY'S WORLD"** class meets on Sunday mornings from 9-10 am in the middle classroom (across from Pastor Tyler's office). This group is reading through the book, "A is for Alabaster" by Anna Carter Florence. Each week is independent of the other weeks, so come as you are able. If you need a book, or for any other questions, contact Heather Casiano. We will resume January 4!
- **FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!** If you don't already follow us on Facebook and Instagram, please start doing so @firstpchighland on both Facebook and Instagram.
- **INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF FPCH?** You are always welcome here, whether a member or not! If you are interested in joining as a member, though, we would love to have you! Please talk to Pastor Tyler if you would like to learn more.

Opportunities to serve as the HEART, HANDS, and FEET of Jesus Christ:

- **BLESSING BOX** Please continue to place items in the Blessing Box and take items if you are a person in need! Items most commonly donated: Canned goods with pull tabs, socks, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, small snacks, toiletries, baby wipes and diapers. Please check expiration dates!
- **HELP STOCK OUR PANTRY!** Please pick up a beautifully decorated grocery bag in the narthex and fill it to help the church's food pantry.

Prayer List

Anthony
Brady Vanes
George Griner
Guy Hendricks
Bill and Anettia Holmes
David Markley
Pat and David Kingen
Diana and Ray Mendoza
Janet Orem
Cindy Waltz and Sister
Yvonne Suroviak
Georgette Sknerski
Jakob Holden
Denise Matthys
Jan Oprea
Florance Cody
Kathy & Chuck Pumnea
Laura Buono Domsic
The Windstrups
Rick Parker
Gary Everhart
Caroline Studer
Darlene O'Brien
Doug & Sue Matthews
Janet Terpstra
Glen Nahler
Tom
David Hamblin
Jana Tolley
Larry & Bonnie Perryman
Delta Rose
Winnie Owen
Breeanne
Mom Bechtler

Victor
Marian Clayton
Ella P
Melissa J.
Rita Stronczek
Keren, Zuriel, and Gedeon
OGB
Edna Cruz
Charlie
Jerry & Rena Martinez
Nicole
Greg
Pastor Jane
Mary Ellen Edeus
Jane and David
Flora R.
Tyler Gall
Phil
Luana Sulkowski
Sonny Buono
Shannon Sutton
Robin
Mary Hurtt
Eunice
Betsy
David
Trina & Scott
Joe & Kathy
Breanne Polan
Tammy
Alex
Ben
Mike Kelly
Sue Heth

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;
my whole being shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

62 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn
and her salvation like a burning torch.

² The nations shall see your vindication
and all the kings your glory,
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the Lord will give.

³ You shall be a beautiful crown in the hand of the Lord
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Colossians 3:12-17

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Luke 2:21-38

²¹ When the eighth day came, it was time to circumcise the child, and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

²² When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), ²⁴ and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word,

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.”

³³ And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.”

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

What’s in a Name?

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:21-38

Back before the birth and the shepherds and the angels and before the subversive visit to Elizabeth with John jumping for joy and Mary magnificating, the angel Gabriel came to Mary out of the blue and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you. Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.” Before the child started developing in her womb, Mary knew his name.

Shakespeare has been on my mind since watching the masterpiece Hamnet a few weeks ago—a beautiful movie about grief and about the making of Hamlet. Vima and I stumbled upon the movie in seeking a warm place while out on the coldest weekend of the year. But today I am talking about a different Shakespearean masterpiece. In Shakespeare’s tragic masterpiece, Juliet famously asks Romeo the question, “What’s in a name?” She does so to make the point that it matters not that his name is Montague and hers Capulet. She declares, “That which we call a rose, by any other word would smell as sweet.” This makes a lot of sense. Something will maintain its material reality, its essence, no matter what we call it. Romeo would still be the same beloved man if he didn’t bear the accursed Montague name. A rose is still a rose no matter what.

And yet, if Romeo Montague were not Romeo Montague, there would be no story. The drama would be lost, the commentary on the arbitrary nature of our many hatreds gone. Yes, there was something about that name Romeo. So, what's in a name? The drama, the origin of the plot, the meaning behind it all.

So let's turn back to that name *Jesus*. Today it is one of the best known names in the world. Billions upon billions have called upon it as a name of power. Many have seen miracles occurring by the power of that name. Many seal their prayers with that name, believing that doing so will lead to intercession at the right hand of God the creator. Many speak that name to ward off curses and to call for blessings.

Even our reading from *Colossians* today ends with these words, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." What's in a name? Clearly, a lot. But where did this specific name come from? Why did Gabriel command it to be Jesus?

Let's take a look at the progression of language that got us this name. Jesus, of course, is the English version. There are other iterations across modern languages. Hesus, Yesu, Jesu, Isa, Isha, Iso, Isho, Yeshu. Our English iteration comes from the Latin word *Iesus*, which is a transliteration of the Greek Ἰησοῦς, which is a translation of the Hebrew *Yeshua*. *Yeshua* would have been the name spoken by the angel Gabriel to the devout Jewish mother Mary. Of course, this name *Yeshua* is packed with intentional meaning. Mary, Joseph, and their fellow Jews would have known it for its ancestral use. I know that name well through my beloved brother and hero. You see, in the twisting paths of language development and translation, *Yeshua* made its way into English as Joshua. The most famous Joshua of Jewish ancestry was Joshua, son of Nun, the one who ultimately delivered the Israelites from their decades of wandering in the wilderness.

And it makes all the sense in the world that this deliverer of God's people bore that name. In Hebrew, *Yeshua* is a noun that comes from the verb "to rescue" or "to deliver." So, it means "the one who delivers...the savior." As is always the case with Hebrew, though, there is something more to it. You see, *Yeshua* is itself a shortened version of *Yehoshua*. If you listen closely, this name has the same ingredients of that most holy of names, *YHWH*. *Yehoshua*. It literally means that YHWH is our savior. Now, all of this makes sense in light of the incarnation, doesn't it? *Jesus*. *Yeshua*. *Yehoshua*. *YHWH* in the flesh.

YHWH entered the word *Yehoshua*, which was shortened to *Yeshua*, which we say as Joshua. *Yeshua* became the Greek word Ἰησοῦς became the Latin word *Iesus* became the English word *Jesus*. Phew! What's in a name, you say? Intentionality, meaning, identity. YHWH is our savior. Our savior is *Yeshua*.

Officially, Jesus' name would have been *Yeshua ben Yosef*, *Yeshua* son of Joseph. In light of all that we have discussed over the past several weeks, I think it would be most accurate to call him *Yeshua ben Miriam*. So, after eight days, *Yeshua* was officially named and circumcised. That wasn't the end of the ceremonies, though. In devout Jewish fashion, he still had to be officially presented to God at the temple as the firstborn child. According to Levitical law, this would have taken place at 40 days old. So, 32 days after naming *Yeshua*, Mary and Joseph traveled to the temple in Jerusalem.

And this is where the rubber hits the road on the power of that name. You see, the temple at that time was a microcosm of all that was wrong with the structuring of society. You had the high priests and their acolytes nearest to the holy of holies. Only other able-bodied, well-to-do, ritually pure men could even approach that area. There were actually designated spaces for women and for those considered ritually unclean, like the lepers, way out towards the entrance. And then in front of the Beautiful Gate, outside the temple altogether you had people who were considered impure because of their disabilities, their race, their health.

As soon as the Holy Family walks in, Simeon immediately recognizes him as the savior, grabs the child and speaks a prophecy upon him. After Simeon speaks, the prophetess Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher begins to praise God. Let's focus on her for a moment, for she is truly remarkable. The text tells us that she is 84 years old. Her husband died seven years after their marriage, meaning that she became a widow

probably around the age of 21. So, for 63 years she has been in the temple night and day, never leaving, always praising God. 63 YEARS!

She is an octogenarian, ancient by ancient standards (not by modern standards! 80 is the new 60!). She is surely wrinkled and wise. She is probably a little unsteady on her feet, perhaps a little hard of hearing and hard of seeing. And yet those rolling eyes behind paper-thin lids have seen visions of this world and visions of the beyond. Those ears have heard decades of stories and teachings about a God, YHWH, whose presence in the *sanctum sanctorum*, the holy of holies she could not access due to the aforementioned hierarchy.

As a widow Anna had no status. She would have been begging for alms and food, relying on the charity of other worshipers and temple servants...though I doubt she received much from those money changers and marketeers whom Jesus would chase out with a whip years later. She would have been relegated to the women's section at the edge of the temple and then would have been stuck on even the periphery of that because she was a widow.

Picture Anna—poor, old, without status, forever devout and forever denied entry into the presence of her God. And then after 63 years she hears the name of a baby being presented at the temple. *Yeshua*. YHWH is our savior. The incarnate God in full glory was carried into the front door, right by the spaces designated for the women and the lepers. So, after 63 years, Anna finally stood in the presence of God. She didn't need the permission of the Sadducees to do so. She didn't need the status that came with having a husband or sons. She didn't need to be part of the wealthy elite. She didn't need to be cozy with the empire. No, Mary whose childbirth, according to the law, had rendered her too impure to even enter the gate of the temple for the last 40 days, carried the living God, YHWH our savior, into the realm of Anna, the realm of the wild-eyed woman of the hot-sand temple. The sanctum sanctorum was no longer the provenance of the powerful.

What's in a name? Intentionality, meaning, identity. YHWH in our midst, outside of the sanctum sanctorum, available to all, especially the Annas of this world.

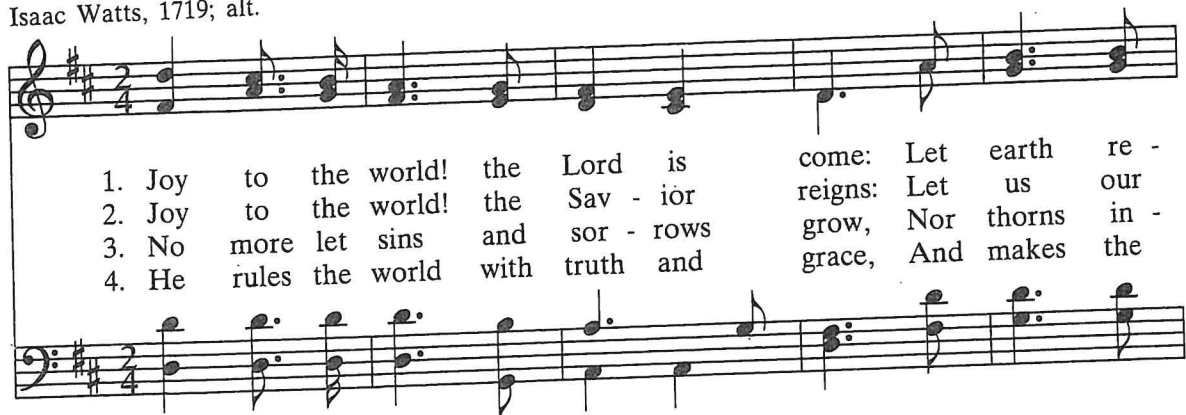
Yeshua ben Yosef. Yeshua ben Miriam. God with us. Amen.

Joy to the World!

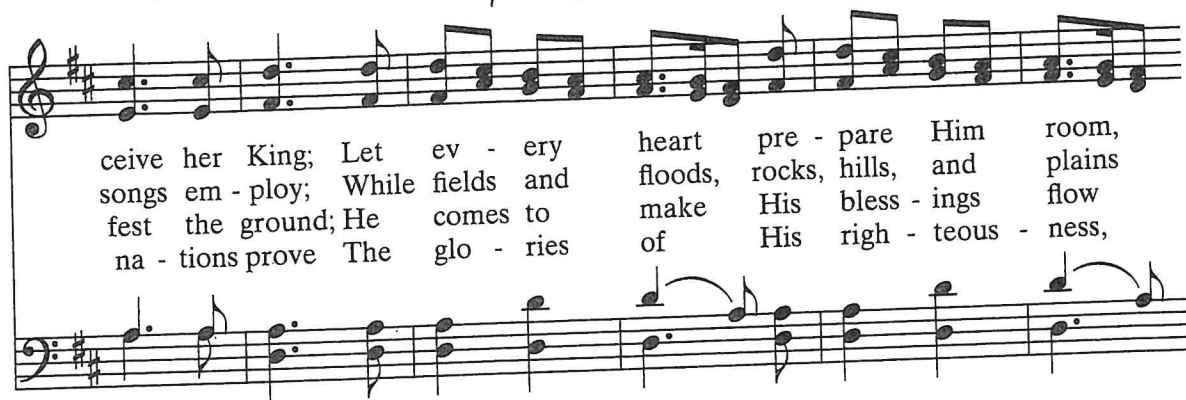
ANTIOCH CM with repeat

Attr. George Frederick Handel, 1742
Arr. Lowell Mason, 1836


Isaac Watts, 1719; alt.



1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come: Let earth re -
 2. Joy to the world! the Sav - ior reigns: Let us our
 3. No more let sins and sor - rows grow, Nor thorns in -
 4. 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
 fest the ground; He comes to make His bless - ings flow
 na - tions prove The glo - ries of His righ - teous - ness,



And heaven and na - ture sing, And heaven and na - ture
 Re - peat the sound - ing joy, Re - peat the sound - ing
 Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is
 And won - ders of His love, And won - ders of His
 And heaven and na - ture sing,

And



sing, And heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, Re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, Far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, And won - ders, won - ders of His love.
 heaven and na - ture sing,

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

29


GO TELL IT 7.6.7.6 with refrain

African-American spiritual
Arr. John W. Work III, 1940

Stanzas, John W. Work II (1872-1925)

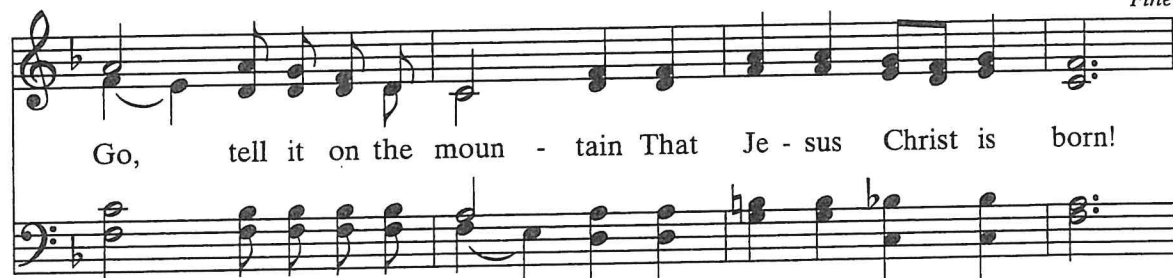
Harm. and adapt. Melva Wilson Costen, 1987

Refrain

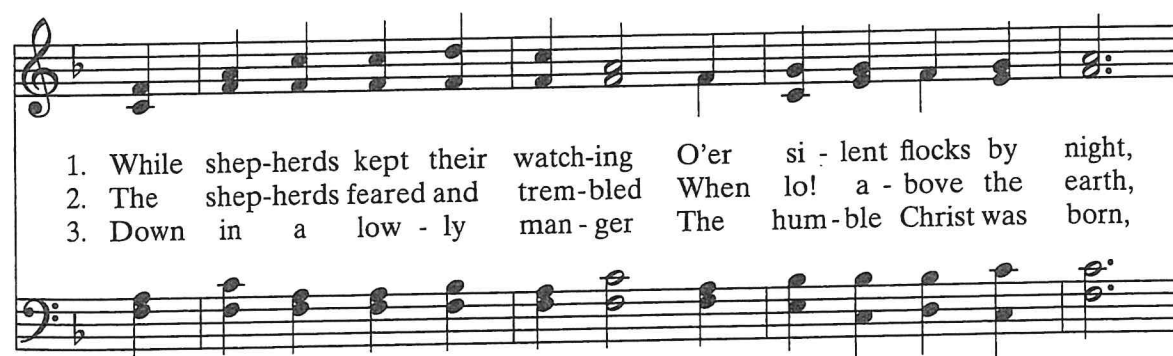


Go, tell it on the moun - tain O-ver the hills and ev - ery - where;

Fine

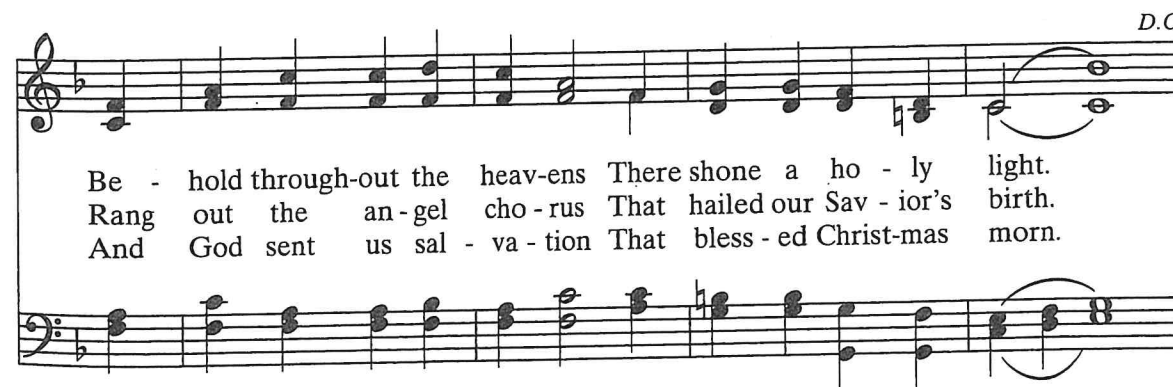


Go, tell it on the moun - tain That Je - sus Christ is born!



1. While shep-herds kept their watch-ing O'er si - lent flocks by night,
2. The shep-herds feared and trem-bled When lo! a - bove the earth,
3. Down in a low - ly man - ger The hum - ble Christ was born,

D.C.



Be - hold through-out the heav-ens There shone a ho - ly light.
Rang out the an - gel cho - rus That hailed our Sav - ior's birth.
And God sent us sal - va - tion That bless - ed Christ-mas morn.