



PARISH

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SERVICE OF CELEBRATION AND COVENANT RENEWAL

Advent
22 December 2024

When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, the ground that was previously common suddenly became uncommon. It was now holy ground—sacred space. When Jacob awoke from his midnight vision of the presence of God, he anointed with oil the rock upon which he had rested his head. It was sacred space. When God touches earth, the place is holy. When God appears in history, the time is holy. There was never a more holy place than the city of Bethlehem, where the Word became flesh. There was never a more holy time than Christmas morning when Emmanuel was born. Christmas is a holiday. It is the holiest of holy days. —R.C. Sproul

GOD CALLS HIS PEOPLE TO WORSHIP

It is God Himself who calls His people to worship. We do not call ourselves, but it is the King who opens His gates and beckons us into His courts.

Gospel Invitation—Isaiah 7:14

Good news! Glad tidings! Great joy! “The Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel.”

Sung Response—On Christmas Night All Christians Sing, Vs. 1

On Christ - mas night all Christ - ians sing, to hear the news the an - gels bring,

On Christ - mas night all Christ - ians sing, to hear the news the an - gels bring,

News of great joy, news of great mirth, news of our mer - ci - ful King's birth.

The image shows three staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The first two staves are identical and end with a repeat sign. The third staff continues the melody and includes a 9/4 time signature change for the final two measures.

Text & Music: SUSSEX CAROL, Traditional English carol.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Call to Worship—Psalm 103:19-22

Pastor: The Lord has established His throne in the heavens.

All: And His kingdom rules over all.

Reader 1: Bless the Lord, O you His angels, you mighty ones who do His Word, obeying the voice of His Word!

Reader 2: Bless the Lord, all His hosts, His ministers, who do His will! Bless the Lord in all His works.

All: Bless the Lord in all places of His dominion.

Pastor: Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Congregational Hymn—Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Come, Thou long - ex - spect - ed Je - sus, born to set Thy peo - ple free;
Born Thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child and yet a king,

F

From our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in Thee.
Born to reign in us for - ev - er, now Thy gra - cious king - dom bring.

Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth Thou art,
By Thine own e - ter - nal spir - it rule in all our hearts a - lone;

Dear De - sire of ev - 'ry na - tion, joy of ev - 'ry long - ing heart.
By Thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it, raise us to Thy glo - rious throne.

GOD SPEAKS TO HIS PEOPLE THROUGH HIS WORD

The Bible is the means by which God graciously reveals Himself to His people—so we listen, read, and study with expectant hearts.

Congregational Hymn—Once In Royal David's City



Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly cat - tle shed,
He came down to Earth from Heav - en who is God and Lord of all,
And our eyes at last shall see Him, through His own re - deem - ing love,
Not in that poor low - ly sta - ble, with the ox - en stand - ing by,



Where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a man - ger for His bed:
And His shel - ter was a sta - ble, and His cra - dle was a stall:
For that Child so dear and gen - tle is our Lord in Heav'n a - bove;
We shall see Him, but in Heav-en, set at God's right hand on high;



Mar - y was that moth - er mild, Je - sus Christ her lit - tle child.
With the poor, and mean, and low - ly, lived on Earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.
And He leads His child - ren on to the place where He is gone.
When like stars His chil - dren crowned all in white shall wait a - round.

Text: C.F. Alexander, 1848; Music: IRBY, H.J. Gauntlett, 1849.

Responsive Scripture Reading—Psalm 103:1-6, 19

Elder: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!

All: **Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.**

Elder: He forgives all our iniquity. He heals all our diseases. He redeems our life.

All: **He crowns us with steadfast love and mercy. He satisfies us with good so that our strength is renewed like the eagle's.**

Elder: The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.

All: **The Lord has established His throne in the heavens and His kingdom rules over all.**

Elder: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Congregational Hymn—O Little Town Of Bethlehem



O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem how still we see thee lie!
For Christ is born of Ma - ry, and gath - ered all a - bove,
O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, des - cend 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 - d'ring love.
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
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels, the great glad tid - ings 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.
O come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el.

Text: Phillips Brooks, 1867; Music: ST. LOUIS, Lewis H. Redner, 1868.

Baptism of Jean Michael, son of Niels and Akiko Michael

Reading of the Word—Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Sung Response—On Christmas Night All Christians Sing, Vs. 3



When sin de-parts be - fore His grace, then life and health come in its place,



When sin de-parts be - fore His grace, then life and health come in its place;



An - gels and men with joy may sing, all for to see the new - born King.

Text & Music: SUSSEX CAROL, Traditional English carol.

Sermon—*The Height of Irony*

—Pastor Emeritus, George Grant

GOD CALLS HIS PEOPLE TO CONFESSION, REPENTANCE, AND RECONCILIATION

The people of God respond to His Word by confessing their sins, repenting of their sinful ways, and seeking God's favor through the reconciling work of Jesus, the Son of God.

Confession of Sin—based on Isaiah 9:2-3

Pastor: Lord, we come confessing. We confess that we were people who walked in darkness.

All: **But now we have seen a great light.**

Pastor: We who lived in a land of deep darkness—on us light has shined.

All: **Despite our sins, You have multiplied our blessings, You have increased our joy and so we rejoice before You.**

(Silent prayers of confession)

Sung Response—Lamb Of God

UNISON

O Lamb of God, that takes a - way the sins of the world, have mer-cy on us. —

O Lamb of God, that takes a - way the sins of the world, have mer-cy on us. —

O Lamb of God, that takes a - way the sins of the world,

Slightly faster

WOMEN

Grant us Thy peace, Grant us Thy, Grant us Thy peace,

MEN

Grant us Thy peace, Grant us Thy peace, Grant us Thy peace.

Text: Traditional, based on John 1:29; Music: CLOVERCROFT AGNUS DEI, Henry C. Haffner, 2019.

Assurance of Pardon—Titus 3:4-7; Revelation 15:3-4

When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy. And He has poured out His Spirit upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Pastor: This is the promise of God.

All: **This is the Word of the Lord.**

Pastor: Great and marvelous are Your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are Your ways, King of the nations.

All: **Who will not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?**

Pastor: For You alone are holy. Amen.

Sung Response—Twofold Amen

A - men, a - men

Text: Traditional; Music: DRESDEN, Johann Naumann, 18th century.

HEAVENLY GIFT—*EUCCHARISTO*

As God beckons His people to the bounty of His table, they make joyous profession of their fealty to Him.

Profession of Faith—The Apostles' Creed

We believe in God:

The Father Almighty, the Creator of Heaven and Earth;

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,

Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,

Was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into Hell.

On the third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into Heaven and now sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;

From whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit; the one holy church—both visible and invisible;

The communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins;

The resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.

Amen.

Sursum Corda

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

Pastor: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to You, Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth. Therefore, we praise You, Triune God, and we join our voices with the angels, the archangels, and the whole company of Heaven in this hymn of eternal praise:

UNISON



Glo-ry to God in the high - est, and peace to His peo-ple on earth. —

WOMEN

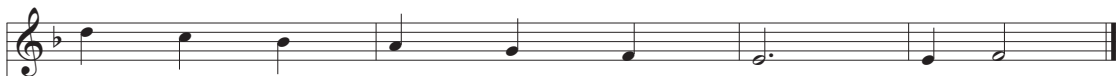


We praise You, we bless You, we wor-ship You, we glo-ri-fy You,

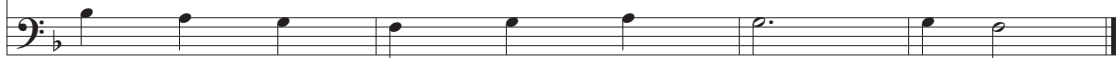
MEN



We praise You, we bless You, we wor-ship You, we glo-ri-fy You,



We give You thanks for Your great glo - ry.



We give You thanks for Your great glo - ry.

Text: Traditional, based on Luke 2:14; Music: CLOVERCROFT GLORIA, Henry C. Haffner, 2019.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION AND THE LORD'S TABLE

This table is open to all baptized Christians who have made a profession of faith. You may come forward to receive the bread and wine or grape juice.

Congregational Hymn—For What Did Christ The Babe Appear



For what did Christ, the babe, ap - pear, fash - ioned in an earth - ly style?
For what did Christ, the babe, ap - pear, and His Fa - ther's will o - bey?
For what did Christ, the babe, ap - pear, of - fering His most pre - cious blood?



And rest with - in a man - ger here, Im - man - u - el, a heaven - ly child?
From Jor - dan's wa - ters in ho - ly fear, to the cross what was gained?
And once or - dain that I should hear, plac - ing me with - in the flood?



This, fore - told in an - cient times! This th'an - ge - lic hosts now sing,
All is gained by Him a - lone. All the law is sat - is - fied.
In the flood of Gos - pel light, clear and pure as shin - ing star,



Glo - ry un - to God on high, the Child of Peace is born a King!
All o - bed - ience to the throne! He, the per - fect sac - ri - fice.
Fast I stand with end in sight; dis - tant yet, though not a - far.

Text & Music: Nathan George, 2009.

Congregational Hymn—All My Heart This Night Rejoices



All my heart this night re - joic - es
Forth to - day the Con - qu'ror go - eth,
He be - comes the Lamb that tak - eth
Come, then, ban - ish all your sad - ness



As I hear, far and near, sweet - est an - gel voic - es
Who the foe, sin and woe, death and hell, o'er - throw - eth
Sin a - way and for aye full a - tone - ment mak - eth.
One and all, great and small; come with songs of glad - ness.



"Christ is born," their choirs are sing - ing
Be - came man, man to de - liv - er;
For our life His own He ten - ders;
Love Him who with love is glow - ing;



Till the air ev - 'ry - where now with joy is ring - ing.
The dear Son now is one with our blood for - ev - er.
And our race, by His grace, meet for glo - ry ren - ders.
Hail the star, from a - far, light and joy be - stow - ing.

Text: Paul Gerhardt, 1653, tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1858, alt. 2018;
Music: WARUM SOLLT' ICH MICH DENN GRAMEN, Johann Ebeling, 1666.

GOD'S PEOPLE RESPOND IN GRATEFUL PRAISE, PETITIONS, TITHES & OFFERINGS

Our praying, serving, and giving are essential aspects of worship. It is here that our faith moves from our heads and hearts into our lives and callings.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession—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.*

Congregational Hymn—O Come, All Ye Faithful



O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant,
God of God, Light of Light;
Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,
Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this hap - py morn - ing:

O come ye, O come ye to Beth - le - hem;
Lo, He ab - hors not the vir - gin's womb:
Sing, all ye cit - i - zens of Heav'n a - bove;
Je - sus, to Thee be all glo - ry giv'n;

Come and be - hold Him born the King of an - gels;
Ver - y God, be - got - ten, not cre - a - ted;
Glo - ry to God in the high - est;
Word of the Fa - ther, late in flesh ap - pear - ing;

O come, let us a - dore Him, O come, let us a - dore Him,
O come, let us a - dore Him, Christ the Lord.

Text: Latin hymn, tr. Frederick Oakeley, 1841; Music: ADESTE FIDELES, *Cantus Diversi*, 1751.

GOD SENDS HIS PEOPLE OUT

After calling His people into His presence, forgiving their sins, instructing them in His Word, and providing a foretaste of the marriage supper of the Lamb, God sends His people into the world to show His light in the darkness.

Benediction—based on Luke 2:29-32

Lord, now let Your servants go in peace; Your Word has been fulfilled. Our own eyes have seen the salvation which You have prepared in the sight of all: a light to lighten the nations and the glory of Your people. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. *Amen.*

Sung Response—On Christmas Night All Christians Sing, Vs. 4



All out of dark-ness we have light, which made the an - gels sing this night,



All out of dark-ness we have light, which made the an - gels sing this night:



"Glo-ry to God and peace to men, Now and for ev - er-more. A - men."

Text and Music: SUSSEX CAROL, Traditional English carol.

Announcements

Worship Notes:

For that Child, so dear and gentle, is our Lord in Heav'n above...
—C. F. Alexander

Christmas in our culture can often be a time of great contrasts: the coldest and darkest part of the year is marked by decorations of brightly colored lights, and the traditional period of reflection and repentance is observed along with rich foods, gift giving, and boisterous singing. Contrast is also at the heart of the Christmas story, something I think you'll notice in this morning's service. We'll read twice from Psalm 103, praising our King whose throne is established in the heavens and whose Kingdom rules over all. This is a ruler who would be rightly described as the "hope of all the earth" and "desire of every nation." But in between these readings, we'll sing hymns that speak of that King being "born a child" in a "lowly cattle shed," living on earth "with the poor and mean and lowly." The "little town of Bethlehem," far from the centers of worldly power, becomes the home of a ruler greater than Ceaser Augustus in Rome. He is a conqueror, who goes forth to overthrow sin, woe, death, and hell—but He does this as a sacrificial lamb. He is both King of Peace and a babe in a manger, fashioned in earthly style. —Henry C. Haffner

Key Words: Decree, Register, Bethlehem, David, Son, Swaddling, Manger
Keystone Verse: There was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)



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All Biblical quotes taken from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.