



MIDTOWN
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Evening Worship

Third Sunday in Advent
12.17.2023

Welcome to Worship at Midtown! We are really glad to have you with us for worship today. Whether you have been a Christian for many years, or are trying to sort out what the Christian faith is all about, or are just here as a favor to your friend, we're happy to have you.

We have a nursery provided for little ones. You are welcome to keep them in the service with you if you prefer.

Reflection

"The more we are proud that the Bethlehem story is plain enough to be understood by the shepherds, and almost by the sheep, the more do we let ourselves go, in dark and gorgeous imaginative frescoes or pageants about the mystery and majesty of the Three Magian Kings."

--G. K. Chesterton

"The great majority of people will go on observing forms that cannot be explained; they will keep Christmas Day with Christmas gifts and Christmas benedictions; they will continue to do it; and some day suddenly wake up and discover why."

--G. K. Chesterton

The Word

Call to Worship—

[Mitch & Emily Catling]

Lighting of the Shepherd's Candle

The first candle in the Advent wreath, the Prophet's Candle, reminds us of the prophets' hope for God's salvation to come.

The second candle, the Peace Candle, reminds us of Jesus' humility in coming to earth and being born in a stall.

The third candle reminds us of the joy of the shepherds as they heard the good news of Jesus' arrival, for: "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them" (Luke 2:20).

As we light the Shepherd's Candle we remember that it wasn't the rich and famous who came to worship Jesus that first Christmas Eve, but poor shepherds. Through Jesus Christ, God invites us, as his children, those who are "poor in spirit," to come into His presence and worship Him.

Let us stand and sing as we celebrate the coming of God to the world.

Angels from the Realms of Glory

Music & Lyrics: James Montgomery & Henry Smart

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'Angels from the Realms of Glory'. It consists of three staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the lyrics 'An-gels from the realms of glo-ry, wing your flight o'er all the earth;'. The second staff contains 'Ye who sang cre - a - tion's sto-ry, now pro-claim Mes - si - ah's birth:'. The third staff is labeled 'Refrain' and contains the lyrics 'Come and wor-ship, come and wor-ship, wor-ship Christ the new-born King.' The music is written in a simple, accessible style with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp.

An-gels from the realms of glo-ry, wing your flight o'er all the earth;

Ye who sang cre - a - tion's sto-ry, now pro-claim Mes - si - ah's birth:

Refrain
Come and wor-ship, come and wor-ship, wor-ship Christ the new-born King.

Shepherds in the fields abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with man is now residing, yonder shines the infant Light:
[Refrain]

Sages, leave your contemplations, brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations; ye have seen his natal star:
[Refrain]

Saints before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending, in his temple shall appear: [Refrain]

All creation, join in praising God the Father, Spirit, Son;
Evermore your voices raising to the eternal Three in One: [Refrain]

Prayer of Invocation

Call to Confession of Sin

Luke 1:51-54

He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.

Confession of Sin

[You are invited to confess your sins silently at this time.]

Come, O Redeemer, Come

Music & Lyrics: Fernando Ortega

The musical score is written on four staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is simple and hymn-like. The lyrics are printed below the notes.

Fa - ther en-throned on high; Ho - ly, ho - ly.
An - cient e - ter - nal Light; hear our prayer;
Come, O Re-deem-er, come; grant us mer-cy.
Come, O Re-deem-er, come; grant us peace.

Lord, save us from the dark, of our striving,
Faithless and troubled hearts, weighed down.
Come, oh Redeemer, come, grant us mercy.
Come, oh Redeemer, come, grant us peace.

Look now upon our need, Lord be with us.
Heal us and make us free, from our sin.
Come, oh Redeemer, come, grant us mercy.
Come, oh Redeemer, come, grant us peace.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Luke 1:68-69

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.

Minister: May the peace of Christ be with you!

All: And also with you!

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Music & Lyrics: Polish Folk Carol and Isaac Wardell, Kate Bluett, Paul Zach

The musical score is written on five staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is simple and consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are printed below the notes.

In-fant ho - ly, in-fant low - ly, hea-ven's high - est love come
down. For the poor, you left your glo - ry and you laid a - side your
crown. Weak and help - less, here you slum - ber in a
sta - ble with your mo - ther as the shep - herds ga - ther
'round Do you they know you've left your crown?

Infant holy, Infant Lowly, You who once held heaven's pow'r,
Now You be here, cold and hungry in the silent midnight hour.
With Your parents wrapped in worry, still exhausted from the journey.
You were helpless in that hour, Yet You set aside Your pow'r.

Infant Holy, Infant lowly, King of kings and Lord of lords.
You have come to us with nothing, as the poorest of the poor.
So we come to You in wonder, see You helpless as You slumber,
And we lay our gift before Christ the Savior, weak and poor.

The Prayers of the People

[Led by Tim Davis]

[Pray the bold portions aloud together]

Leader: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Leader: Let us pray.

Father in heaven, you sent your son, the true Light, into our dark world.

We ask you to continue your work, bringing reconciliation, gospel light, and healing.

For this congregation and others in Tucson:

Bless our labors and spread the gospel through us.

(Pray for Midtown and other congregations in the city.)

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those who suffer illness, poverty, hunger, injustice, and loneliness:

Hear their cries and lift their burdens.

(Pray for the sick, the homeless, the mentally ill, and others who suffer.)

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those in positions of public trust:

Guide them and lead them to make wise and just decisions.

(Pray for President Biden, Governor Hobbs, Mayor Romero and others in power.)

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Let us join the church throughout the ages in praying as Jesus taught us:

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.

New Testament Reading

[Reader: Hannah Johnson]

James 2:22-26

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Reading

Matthew 21:28-32

Reader: The Gospel of Jesus Christ.

People: **Praise be to you, O Christ.**

What Child Is This?

Lyrics: William C. Dix; Music: Greensleeves



What child is this who laid to rest; on Ma-ry's lap is sleep-ing? Whom



an-gels greet with an-thems sweet, while shep herds watch are keep-ing?



This, this _ is Christ the King, whom shep-hards guard and an-gels sing;



Haste, haste _ to bring Him laud, the babe the Son of Ma - ry.

Why lies He in such mean estate, where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spears shall pierce him through, the cross he bore for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the Babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh, come, peasant, king, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise a song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby;
Joy, joy for Christ is born, The babe, the Son of Mary.

Old Testament Reading

Joshua 2:1-21

And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there. ²And it was told to the king of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." ³Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." ⁴But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. ⁵And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." ⁶But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. ⁷So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out.

⁸Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof ⁹and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. ¹⁰For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. ¹¹And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. ¹²Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's

house, and give me a sure sign ¹³that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." ¹⁴And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the Lord gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."

¹⁵Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall. ¹⁶And she said to them, "Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned. Then afterward you may go your way." ¹⁷The men said to her, "We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. ¹⁸Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household. ¹⁹Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head. ²⁰But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear." ²¹And she said, "According to your words, so be it." Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window

Minister: The Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

Rev. Charles Garland

The Table

Confession of Faith

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Invitation and Prayer

[Communion, also called The Lord's Supper or the Eucharist, is the family meal of Christians. We invite all committed followers of Jesus Christ to partake of this sacrament: those who are baptized members of a congregation which proclaims the gospel, who are at peace with God and with their neighbor, and who seek strength to live more faithfully for Christ. If you are not a Christian, or if you are not prepared to share in this meal, we encourage you to spend this time in prayer.]

The Sursum Corda (Lift Up Your Hearts)

Minister: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to the Lord.

Minister: Let us give thanks to our Lord God.

All: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

The Words of Institution

The Mystery of Faith

Minister: Therefore, let us proclaim the mystery of faith.

**All: Christ has died. Christ is risen.
Christ will come again!**

Minister: Alleluia! Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

All: Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia!

Minister: The gifts of God for the people of God.

The Giving of the Bread and Cup

[As you are ready please come forward. Take bread and eat it, then take a cup and drink. If you prefer grape juice and/or a gluten free wafer, they are available on the middle table.]

Come Light Our Hearts

Music & Lyrics: Sandra McCracken

Chorus



For You, O Lord, our souls in still - ness wait.



For You, O Lord, our souls in still - ness wait.



Tru-ly our hope is in You, Tru-ly our hope is in You.

Verse



O Lord of life, our on - ly hope, Your ra-dience shines on all who



look to You in the dark, E-mman - u - el come, come light our hearts.

O Joy above all other loves
In You we find more than enough
We come as we are, O heal and restore
Come light our hearts.

The First Noel



The first no - el, the an - gel did say, was to cer - tain poor
shep - herds in fields as they lay. In fields where they lay -
keep - ing their sheep on a cold win - ter's night that was so deep. No -
el, no - el, no - el, no - el.
Born is the King of Is - - ra - el.

They looked up and saw a star, shining in the east beyond them far,
And to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night. [Refrain]

The star drew nigh to the northwest; O'er Bethlehem it took its rest,
And there it did both stop and stay
Right over the place where Jesus lay. [Refrain]

Then let us all with one accord sing praises to our heavenly Lord;
That hath made Heaven and earth of naught,
And with His blood mankind hath bought. [Refrain]

Benediction

Notes



Offering: We have placed an offering box at the back of the sanctuary that you can use as you enter or leave. Online, you can give at (www.mpctucson.org/donate). —>>

Email List: We send out the bulletin and announcements every week before worship and would love to include you. You can email Charles (charles@mpctucson.org) to get on the list.

Christmas Eve Service: Since Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year we will have our regular worship service here at the Vineyard at 5pm. We won't have **childcare** on Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve, and the services will be as family friendly as we can manage.

Solstice Lament Service: Prayer service of lament for the brokenness we experience in the world. Hannah Johnson is looking for someone who can host that evening. December 21st @ 7pm. (hjohnson2706@hotmail.com).

Lost and Found: The Vineyard has a lost and found in the back of the sanctuary behind the counter. They are about to donate unclaimed items, so check and see if you have anything there that you have left.

Pastor: Charles Garland
Music Director: Sarah Lewis
Nursery Director: Sami Skaare
RUF Staff: Matt & Sarah Esswein
RUF Intern: Paige Jackson

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