



Evening Worship

Fourth Sunday in Advent
Christmas Eve
12.24.2023

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.

Our Christmas Eve service is for the whole family so we won't have the nursery available.

Reflection

God is not a kindly old uncle; he is an earthquake.

—Jewish Proverb

Most advice, whether on love or business or politics, is based on the premise that we can just will ourselves into being rational and good and that the correct path to happiness is a straight line. These writers, in the “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” school, are essentially telling you to turn yourself into a superstar by discipline and then everything will be swell.

—David Brooks

The Word

Call to Worship—

[Dan & Nancy Horton]

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

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

The third candle, the Shepherd's Candle, reminds us of the joy of the shepherds as they heard the good news of Jesus' arrival.

The fourth candle is the Angels' candle. It reminds us of the angels' song of peace for all the earth, as we find in Luke's gospel: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.'"

We light the Christ candle to remind us that the light of the world was born this night. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness – on them a light has shined."

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

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Music: Felix Mendelssohn; Lyrics: Charles Wesley



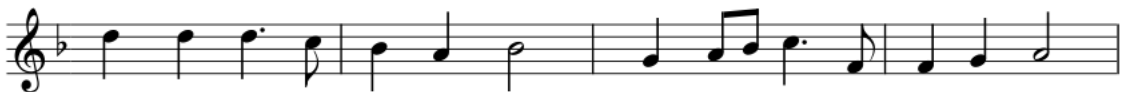
Hark! the her - ald an-gels sing, - "Glo-ry to the new-born King;



peace on earth and mer-cy mild, - God and sin - ners re-con-ciled!"



Joy-ful, all ye na-tions, rise, join the tri-umph of the skies; -



with th'an-gel - ic host pro-claim, "Christ is - born in Beth-le-ham!"

Refrain



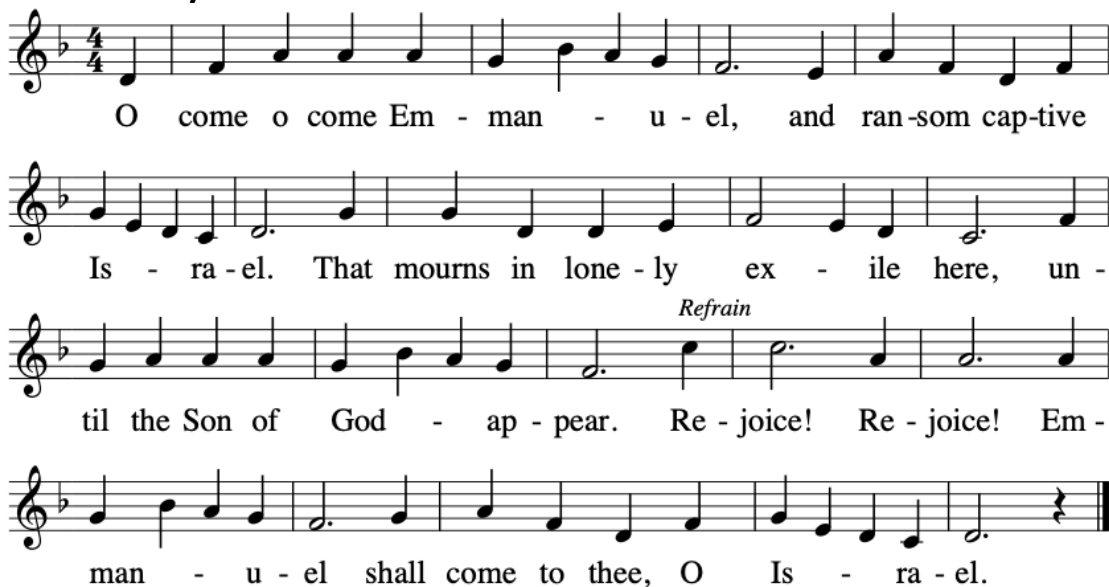
Hark! the her-ald an-gels sing, "Glo-ry - to the new-born King!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail th'incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel.

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.

Prayer of Invocation

O Come, O Come Emmanuel



O come o come Em - man - u - el, and ran-som cap-tive
Is - ra - el. That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here, un -
Refrain
til the Son of God - ap - pear. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em -
man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el.

O come, thou Rod of Jesse free,
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave. [Refrain]

O come, thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe for us the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery. [Refrain]

The Prayers of the People

[Led by Dave Adams]

[Pray the bold portions aloud together]

Leader: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Leader: Let us pray.

Our Lord Jesus Christ,

You came into the world to destroy the works of the devil:

**We ask you to restrain the wickedness in our city
by your Law. We ask you to destroy the wickedness in
our own hearts by your Spirit. We pray that you would
protect us from the temptations, deceits and
accusations of the devil.**

(Pray silently that God would deliver you from evil.)

Our Lord Jesus Christ,

You came into the world to bring us peace with God:

**We pray for peace between nations in Your world;
We pray that this congregation might live in your
peace together; We ask you to come again soon to fully
establish your peace on earth.**

(Pray silently for God to bring peace to the earth.)

Our Lord Jesus Christ,

You came into the world to seek and save that which was lost:

**We pray for our friends who do not yet know you;
We pray for the deepening of our faith
in the gospel of grace.**

(Pray silently for the spread of the good news.)

Our Lord Jesus Christ,
You came into the world to destroy death
and to bring life and immortality to light through the gospel:

**We pray for comfort for those who are suffering
in grief,
in poverty,
in sickness,
in injustice.**

(Pray silently for those who are suffering.)

Our Lord Jesus Christ,
We pray now in the words you 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.**

Gospel Reading.

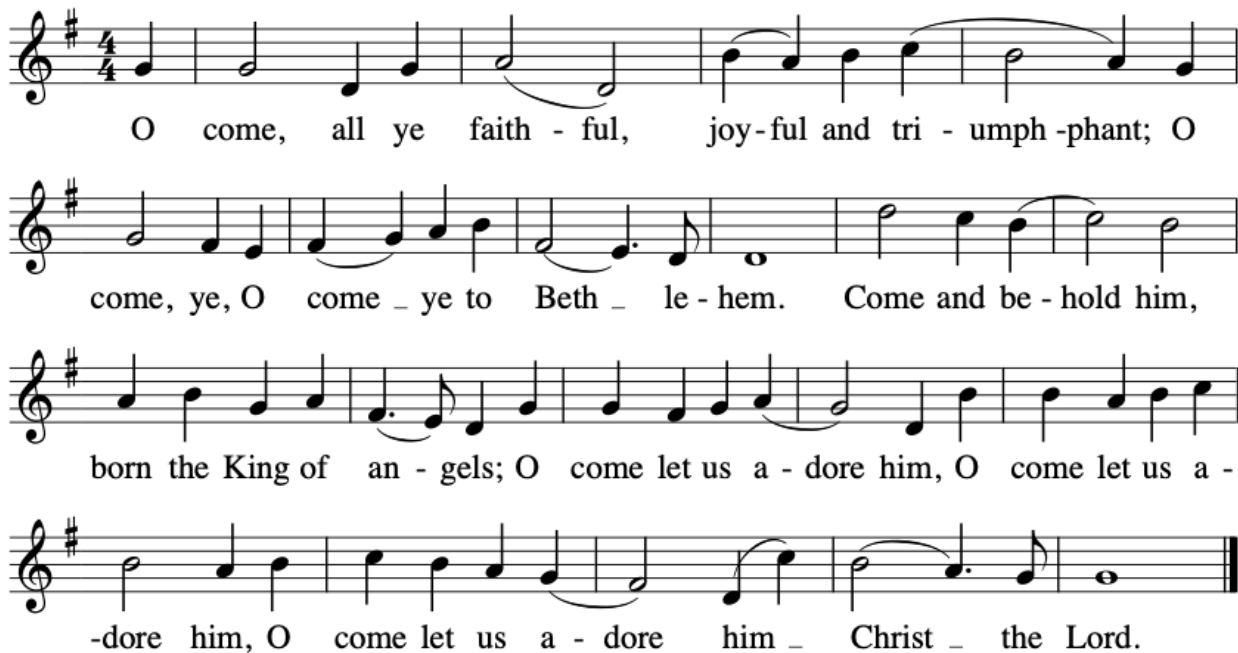
[Reader: Nikki Smith]

Luke 2:26-38

Reader: The Gospel of Jesus Christ.
People: **Praise be to you, O Christ.**

O Come All Ye Faithful

Music & Lyrics: John F. Wade



O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - umph - phant; O
come, ye, O come - ye to Beth - le - hem. Come and be - hold him,
born the King of an - gels; O come let us a - dore him, O come let us a -
dore him, O come let us a - dore him - Christ - the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation;
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest! [Refrain]

God of God, Light of Light;
Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb.
Very God, begotten not created; [Refrain]

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing! [Refrain]

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.]

Joy to the World

Music & Lyrics: Issac Watts



Joy to the world! The Lord is come; let earth re - cieve her King!



Let ev - 'ry - heart - pre - pare - Him - room - and



heav'n and na - ture - sing. and - heav'n and na - ture -



sing, and - heav'n - and heav'n - and na - ture sing.

Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns; let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains;
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness, and wonders of his love,
And wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

Silent Night

[Lighting of candles]

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child
Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night
Shepherds quake at the sight
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia
Christ the Savior is born
Christ the Savior is born

Silent night, holy night
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth

Benediction