

## A SERVICE TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS EVE

\*Please rise in body or spirit.  
[UMH=United Methodist Hymnal (red); TFWS=The Faith We Sing (black)]

### **WELCOME & CALL TO WORSHIP**

Beloved, on this day/night, we gather to enliven the story once again of God who came to dwell among us as a vulnerable baby.

**We rejoice in the day that all the earth awaits.**

We remember the stable, the animals, and the manger that witnessed the arrival of Emmanuel, God with us.

**We rejoice in the day that all the earth awaits.**

We recall the angels who announced the Messiah's birth to the shepherds, those most unlikely witnesses of God's glory.

**We rejoice in the day that all the earth awaits.**

In our remembering and enlivening, we gather today as people of God's promise, witnesses to God's glorious presence among us in the vulnerable, forgotten, and tucked away places of the world.

**We gather to rejoice in the day that all the earth awaits, the day that has already come and will yet be. Thanks be to God! Amen.**

**PRELUDE**

Dr.

Daniel Cummings

**LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE**

First Reader: Tonight, we gather to remember with the prophet Isaiah:

*For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Great will be his authority, 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 onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this (Isaiah 9:6-7).*

**All: We gather to once again bask in the glory that visited a stable and a manger, shepherds watching their flocks, and a young couple cradling the newborn Messiah.**

Second Reader: We light the Christ candle as a sign of the glory that came among us in unexpected places and to unexpected people, that we may be people who seek and follow the glory of the Christ child here and now.

*Light the center candle of the Advent wreath.*

\* **HYMN** *O Come, All Ye Faithful* (vs 1,2,3,6) UMH 234

## **CHRISTMAS STORY IN WORD & SONG**

According to *The Gospel of Luke* 2:1-20

The Christmas Story in Word and Song      *Luke 2: 1-20*

In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant.

### Musical Response

4pm /11pm O Little Town of Bethlehem (vs 1)      230 UMH

7pm    Mary Had a Baby      arr. Lloyd Larson      Chancel Choir/Karah  
Ingraham, soprano

While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

*Musical Response*      *Away in a Manger* (vs 1,2)      UMH 217

Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

The angel said, “Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger.”

Musical Response    *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*    (vs 1)    218  
UMH

Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, “Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.”

Musical Response    *Angels We Have Heard on High (vs 1,2)*    238 UMH

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go right now to Bethlehem and see what’s happened. Let’s confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.”

Musical Response  
4pm    *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*    229 UMH  
7/11pm    *‘Twas in the Moon of Wintertime*    arr. Bryan Greer  
Chancel Choir

They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them.

Musical Response    *In the Bleak Midwinter*    (vs 1,4)    221 UMH

Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

## Musical Response Joy to the World (vs 1,4) UMH 246

## **HOMILY** “Christ: Our Story”

**MUSICAL RESPONSE**      *Go, Tell it On the Mountain* (vs 1,3)      UMH  
251

## A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

We have waited for a long time  
for your hope, your joy, your love  
to shine in the darkness of this world, Almighty God.  
Even now, in our gathering here, we await you.  
In our hearts, we still hope that your light will blaze forth,  
banishing the shadows of this world  
and guiding all the people back to you.

**Yet you did not come into this world in a show of power and glory.**

**You did not shine forth for all of creation to behold.**

## A tiny spark –

a newborn baby.

visible to parents and curious animals.

## A host of angels –

away from the populated areas.

## **singing to migrant workers.**

**A sparkling star –  
guiding foreigners to see what neighbors could not.**

Open our hearts, merciful God, to the sparks of your presence still in this world. Open our eyes, that we might behold your presence in the least likely of places, and among the least likely of people.

God with us, kindle your spark within us,  
that together we may shine forth your light,  
we might banish the shadows of this world,  
we might be the continuation of the Christmas miracle:  
Emmanuel is in this world,  
God is with us, now and evermore. Amen.

## 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

## **PASSING OF THE PEACE**

## REGATHERING HYMN

*Good Christian Friends, Rejoice* (vs. 1) UMH 224

## INVITATION TO OFFERING

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

Dr. Daniel Cummings

## \* DOXOLOGY

VFNI FMMANUFI

## *Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow*

# WITNESS TO THE LIGHT

*Silent Night*

UMH 239

**SENDING HYMN**

*Hark the Herald Angels Sing* (vs 1,3)

UMH 240

**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE**

Dr. Daniel Cummings