

2023 Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols

PRELUDE: *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly* - Anthony Giamanco

Welcome

Call to Worship

In the holy darkness of this night,
amid labor pains and newborn cries,
angel songs and tremors of fear,
tears of relief and looks of amazement,
our Savior takes his first breath.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel has come to us.

CAROL: *O Come, All Ye Faithful* #133 vs 1 & 3

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory: through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Call to Confession

God came into a broken world.

We know all too well the ways it is still broken and hurting.

Let us confess the ways we have done harm, that we may be part of the healing.

Let us open our hearts to receive what God seeks to give.

Prayer of Confession

Emmanuel, you have given us a gift that we can never deserve. You do not ask us to be worthy. You do not ask us to earn your love. Yet the ways we have fallen short threaten to overtake us. But we know we can come to you, even on this holiest of nights, to seek the forgiveness you offer so freely, grateful for your mercy.

Declaration of Forgiveness

The grace of God has appeared,

bringing salvation to us all!

With Christ's birth comes forgiveness and redemption.

Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors! In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

The Christmas Story as found in Luke

(please remain seated)

Reading 1: Luke 2:1 – 7

CAROL: *O Little Town of Bethlehem* #121 vs 1 & 2

Reading 2: Luke 2:8 – 11

CAROL: *The First Nowell* #147 vs 1 & 2

Reading 3: Luke 2:12 – 14

CAROL: *Angels We Have Heard on High* #113 vs 1 & 3

Reading 4: Luke 2:15

CAROL: *What Child is This* #145 vs 1 & 2

Reading 5: Luke 2:16 - 18

CAROL: *Away in the Manger* #114 vs 1, 2, 3

Homily

Susan Murray

Solo: O Holy Night

Mary Kwantes

Prayers of the People

With wonder and thanksgiving for Christ's coming into the world, we pray for the church, the life of the earth, and the whole family. *(brief silence)*

Your infinite love is born to us this night. With choirs of angels the church proclaims the good news. Send us out as messengers of the hope that has come to all people

God of grace. **Hear our prayer.**

You are pleased to dwell with your creatures and the whole earth signs for joy. Renew the splendor of creation from the smallest cell to the widest galaxies. Guide us to be wise stewards of your gifts for the sake of generations to come.

God of grace. **Hear our prayer.**

Your authority is over all nations. Break the rod of oppression in every land and free all people from fear. Bring peace where there is war, compassion where there is suffering, and healing where there is disease.

God of grace. **Hear our prayer.**

You cherish those who are most vulnerable. Protect infants and children, and bless those who care for them. Watch over women giving birth, attend the dying and relieve any who are in pain. Shelter refugee families and those who have no home.

God of grace. **Hear our prayer.**

Your lovingkindness embraces everyone in need. Help any for whom this season is joyless or lonely. Comfort those among us or known to us, who are experiencing distress of body, mind, missing loved ones, or grieving.

God of grace. **Hear our prayer.**

You welcome those who have died into the joyous light of glory. We give thanks for the saints of every time and place who have praised you with lives of faith and humility. Inspire us by their example to love you by serving others.

God of grace. **Hear our prayer.**

Pondering the mystery of eternal love made flesh in Christ Jesus, we commend all for whom we pray to the mercy of God. **Amen**

This can include a candle lighting or virtual candle lighting utilizing cell phones...lit and shared as the sanctuary is darkened. Candles/phones should stay lit through the final reading and extinguished only while singing Joy to the World.

CAROL: *Silent Night* #122 vs 1, 3, 4

READING 6:

On this holy night we contemplate the humility and tender generosity of God, who comes to us as a child and whose first bed is a manger. Almighty God, the creator of all, so overflows with love that God empties God's self and becomes one of us. Throughout Jesus' life, from his lowly birth through his crucifixion, he maintained this divine stance of self-giving love. Gazing at the infant Jesus, can we pray to share the mind of Christ so that we too come to love the world as God loves it and follow a way of life marked by humility and self-giving? Let us go out this evening to share the Good News of Jesus Christ's birth, life, and resurrection with all those we meet.

SENDING CAROL: *Joy to the World* #134 vs 1 & 4

Benediction

The God of Hope fills us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus, the Word made flesh.

Go in Peace, Live in Love, **Serve the Lord!**

Postlude: We Three Kings - C.E. Walz

Scriptures are read from the NRSV translation. Music presented by Lorie Francis, and Mary Kwantes. Worship led by Jonathan Kimball, with Homily by Susan Murray.

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