

# Christmas Eve Service

First Presbyterian Church

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# Christmas Eve Service

*Because of our God's tender mercy the dawn will break upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*<sup>i</sup>

**Prelude:                    The Holly and the Ivy<sup>ii</sup>            Hannah Mergen and Jay Stoneman**

1 The holly and the ivy when they are both full grown,  
of all the trees that are in the wood, the holly bears the crown.

Refrain: The rising of the sun, and the running of the deer,  
the playing of the merry organ, sweet singing in the choir.

2 The holly bears a blossom, white as the lily flower,  
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ, to be our sweet Saviour. [Refrain]

3 The holly bears a berry, as red as any blood,  
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ to do poor sinners good. [Refrain]

4 The holly bears a prickle, as sharp as any thorn,  
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ on Christmas day in the morn. [Refrain]

5 The holly bears a bark, as bitter as any gall,  
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ for to redeem us all. [Refrain]

6 The holly and the ivy, when they are both full grown,  
of all the trees that are in the wood -The holly bears the crown. [Refrain]

## Welcome

### Joy

We have heard the Christmas story so many times sometimes it seems that we no longer hear it at all. We know about Mary and Joseph, the baby, the manger, the shepherds and the angels. In fact, Christmas is ubiquitous that sometimes it seems surprising to find out that Santa and Frosty were not present at that first Christmas.

But in all the hustle and bustle that Christmas has become, the increasingly frantic marketing attempts the closer the holiday comes, are all unable to help us understand the cosmic nature of Christmas. Tonight, through word and song, we would want to invite you to experience Christmas yet again in a new way – to remind ourselves that from the beginning and even now it has always been about Joy. That the baby whose birth we celebrate brings wholeness and peace in a world where often it seems like peace is a vague memory and wholeness a shadow of what was once real.

**\*CAROL                    "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus"<sup>iii</sup>                    #2 BLUE**

1 Come, Thou long expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in Thee.  
Israel's Strength and Consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear Desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.

2 Born Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,  
Born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By Thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;  
By Thine all sufficient merit raise us to Thy glorious throne.

**Advent Candle Lighting:**

O you who sit in darkness, with no hope of light and drunk with despair, look up. The light of the world is coming into your darkness; hope unearned and not deserved is coming. In the words of the prophet, arise for your light is come!<sup>iv</sup>

**We light the first candle to remind us that we can trust God to bring light to our darkness and comfort to our loneliness.**

Justice can be hard to come by. Many times what actually happened is obscured by a cloud of doubt and legalese to prevent justice. But the day is coming when a descendent of David will appear. The LORD's spirit will rest on him. He will not judge by mere appearances, or make decisions on the basis of hearsay. He will treat the poor fairly, and make right decisions.<sup>v</sup>

**We light the second candle in hope for when God's rule over all the world brings justice.**

O God, you give us hope when all hope is gone. You love us despite our ungracious and self-centeredness. By giving us life, you bring your love to our lives. O Christ of God, come anew in our hearts this day, and remain in us forever.

**We light the third candle to remind us of God's unfailing love for us**

Now Jesus came to Nazareth, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and read where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and the regaining of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." "For he is our peace."<sup>vi</sup>

**We light the fourth candle remembering that your grace brings peace and joy to our world.**

O God of grace, you bring us hope when all around is dark because of selfishness and exploitation. Tonight may we see your grace and the certainty of your love.

**We light the Christ candle as we celebrate his grace that calls us to the good news of his peace. Let us worship the Light of the world who bring peace and light in our darkness.**

**Carol: What Child Is This?** *(This is an older text. There are some changes)<sup>vii</sup>*

1 What child is this who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
Come, greet the infant Lord, the babe, the Son of Mary!

2 Why lies he in such low estate, where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here, the silent Word is pleading.  
Nails, spear, shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;  
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the Son of Mary!

3 So bring him incense, gold and myrrh, come rich and poor, to own him.  
The King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him.  
Raise, raise the song on high: the Virgin sings her lullaby.  
Joy, joy for Christ is born, the babe, the Son of Mary!

### **The Joy that was Creation**

God saw all that he had made— and it was very good! There was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day. The heavens and the earth were completed with everything that was in them. By the seventh day God finished the work that he had been doing, and he ceased on the seventh day all the work that he had been doing. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he ceased all the work that he had been doing in creation.<sup>viii</sup>

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you possess understanding! Who set its measurements— if you know— or who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its bases set, or who laid its cornerstone—when the morning stars sang in chorus, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?<sup>ix</sup>

#### **Meditation:**

**Carol: Hark the Herald Angels Sing!<sup>x</sup> #31,32 BLUE**

1 Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain: Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."

2 Christ, by highest heav'n 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 Emmanuel. [Refrain]

3 Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Son of Righteousness!  
 Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with healing in His wings.  
 Mild He lays His glory by, Born that men no more may die,  
 Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth. [Refrain]

### **When Creation's Joy was Destroyed**

The serpent said to the woman, "Surely you will not die, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will open and you will be like divine beings who know good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree produced fruit that was good for food, was attractive to the eye, and was desirable for making one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some of it to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God moving about in the orchard at the breezy time of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the orchard.<sup>xi</sup>

For the creation eagerly waits for the revelation of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility— not willingly but because of God who subjected it— in hope that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage of decay into the glorious freedom of God's children.

For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers together until now. Not only this, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies.<sup>xii</sup>

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also came through a man. For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.<sup>xiii</sup>

### **Meditation:**

#### **Special Music: In The Bleak Mid-Winter<sup>xiv</sup>**

In the bleak midwinter frosty wind made moan, earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone  
 Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow- In the bleak midwinter long ago.

Our God, heav'n cannot hold Him nor earth sustain,  
 Heav'n and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign  
 In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed for the Lord, God Almighty, Jesus Christ

Gloria, Gloria! Now my eyes have seen- Soli Deo Gloria! He salvation brings  
As the Lord has promised, I may go in peace

What can I give Him poor as I am? If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb.  
If I were a Wise Man I would do my part; yet what can I give him? Give my heart  
Gloria, Gloria! Now my eyes have seen - Soli Deo Gloria! He salvation brings  
In the bleak midwinter I may go in peace

### **Anticipating Joy – God becomes Human**

The spirit of the sovereign LORD is upon me, because the LORD has chosen me. He has commissioned me to encourage the poor, to help the brokenhearted, to decree the release of captives, and the freeing of prisoners, to announce the year when the LORD will show his favor, the day when our God will seek vengeance, to console all who mourn, to strengthen those who mourn in Zion, by giving them a turban, instead of ashes, oil symbolizing joy, instead of mourning, a garment symbolizing praise, instead of discouragement. They will be called oaks of righteousness, trees planted by the LORD to reveal his splendor.<sup>xv</sup>

Now the birth of Jesus Christ happened this way. While his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph, her husband to be, was a righteous man, and because he did not want to disgrace her, he intended to divorce her privately.

When he had contemplated this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you will name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

This all happened so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: "Look! The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call him Emmanuel," which means "God with us."<sup>xvi</sup>

### **Tàladh Chrìosda /The Christ Child Lullaby<sup>xvii</sup>**

My love, my treasured one are you, my sweet and lovely son are you  
You are my love my darling new unworthy I, of you. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia  
Your mild and gentle eyes proclaim the loving heart with which you came  
A tender, helpless tiny babe with boundless gifts of grace. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

King of Kings, Most Holy One, God the Son, Eternal One  
You are my God and helpless son- High Ruler of Mankind. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia...

**Meditation:****\*CAROLS****“Angels We Have Heard on High”  
“Joy Has Dawned Upon The World”****#23 BLUE  
INSERT**

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo; Gloria, in excelsis Deo.

Joy has dawned upon the world, promised from creation— God's salvation now unfurled,  
Hope for ev'ry nation. Not with fanfares from above, not with scenes of glory,  
But a humble gift of love— Jesus born of Mary.

Sounds of wonder fill the sky with the songs of angels as the mighty Prince of Life  
Shelters in a stable. Hands that set each star in place, shaped the earth in darkness,  
Cling now to a mother's breast, vuln'erable and helpless.

Shepherds bow before the Lamb, gazing at the glory; gifts of men from distant lands  
Prophecy the story. Gold—a King is born today, Incense—God is with us,  
Myrrh—His death will make a way, and by His blood He'll win us.

Son of Adam, Son of heaven, given as a ransom; reconciling God and man,  
Christ, our mighty champion! What a Savior! What a Friend! What a glorious myst'ry!  
Once a babe in Bethlehem, now the Lord of hist'ry.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo; Gloria, in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King.  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo; Gloria, in excelsis Deo.

**Anticipating Joy – When Jesus Returns**

The LORD who commands armies will hold a banquet for all the nations on this mountain. At this banquet there will be plenty of meat and aged wine— tender meat and choicest wine. On this mountain he will swallow up the shroud that is over all the peoples, the woven covering that is over all the nations; he will swallow up death permanently. The sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from every face, and remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. Indeed, the LORD has announced it!

At that time they will say, "Look, here is our God! We waited for him and he delivered us. Here is the LORD! We waited for him. Let's rejoice and celebrate his deliverance!"<sup>xviii</sup>

A shoot will grow out of Jesse's root stock, a bud will sprout from his roots. The LORD's spirit will rest on him— a spirit that gives extraordinary wisdom, a spirit that provides the ability to execute plans, a spirit that produces absolute loyalty to the LORD. He will take delight in obeying the LORD. He will not judge by mere appearances, or make decisions on the basis of hearsay. He will treat the poor fairly, and make right decisions for the downtrodden of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and order the wicked to be executed. Justice will be like a belt around his waist, integrity will be like a belt around his hips.

A wolf will reside with a lamb, and a leopard will lie down with a young goat; an ox and a young lion will graze together, as a small child leads them along. A cow and a bear will graze together, their young will lie down together. A lion, like an ox, will eat straw. A baby will play over the hole of a snake; over the nest of a serpent an infant will put his hand. They will no longer injure or destroy on my entire royal mountain. For there will be universal submission to the LORD's sovereignty, just as the waters completely cover the sea.<sup>xix</sup>

### **Meditation:**

#### **O Holy Night<sup>xx</sup>**

1 O holy night! the stars are brightly shining; It is the night of the dear Savior's birth.  
 Long lay the world in sin and error pining, Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.  
 A thrill of hope- the weary world rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!  
 Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!  
 O night divine, O night when Christ was born! O night, O holy night, O night divine!

2 Led by the light of faith serenely beaming, With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.  
 So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming, Here came the Wise Men from Orient land.  
 The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger, In all our trials born to be our Friend.  
 He knows our need— to our weakness is no stranger.  
 Behold your King, before Him lowly bend! Behold your King, before Him lowly bend!

3 Truly He taught us to love one another; His law is love and His gospel is peace.  
 Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother, And in His name all oppression shall cease.  
 Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we; Let all within us praise His holy name.  
 Christ is the Lord! O praise His name forever!  
 His pow'r and glory evermore proclaim! His pow'r and glory evermore proclaim!

**Lighting of the Candles:** (Please hold the candles upright once they are lit.)

#### **Poem: A Tale Of Two Gardens <sup>xxi</sup>**

God gave us all a garden once And walked with us at eve





## Words of Invitation

### Words of Thanksgiving and Institution

**Serving of the Elements** – *Please come down the aisle on the piano side of the sanctuary, take a piece of bread and then a cup. After taking the elements, please dispose the cup in the garbage container as you return to your seat via the other aisle. Thank you.*

#### **Carol: Wexford Carol<sup>xxiii</sup>**

Good people all, this Christmas time, consider well and bear in mind -  
 What our good God for us has done in sending his beloved son.  
 With Mary holy we should pray to God with love this Christmas Day.  
 In Bethlehem upon that morn there was a blessed Messiah born.

Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep  
 To whom God's angels did appear which put the shepherds in great fear.  
 'Prepare and go,' the angels said 'To Bethlehem, be not afraid -  
 For there you'll find, this happy morn a princely babe, sweet Jesus born.

With thankful heart and joyful mind the shepherds went, this babe to find  
 And as God's angel had foretold, they did our saviour Christ behold.  
 Within a manger he was laid and by his side the virgin maid  
 Attending on the Lord of life who came on earth to end all strife.

## Joy to the World

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.<sup>xxiv</sup>

#### **Carol: #40 "Joy to the World"<sup>xxv</sup>**

**1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come: Let earth receive her King;  
 Let every heart prepare Him room, And heaven and nature sing,  
 And heaven and nature sing, And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.**

**2 Joy to the world, the Savior reigns: Let us our songs employ;  
 While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains Repeat the sounding joy,  
 Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.**

**3 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.**

**4 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.**

**Benediction<sup>xxvi</sup>**

Because of our God's tender mercy

**The dawn has broken upon us from on high**

To give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

**And to guide our feet into the way of peace**

That we, being rescued, may serve him without fear,

**In holiness and righteousness before him for as long as we live.**

Glory to God in the highest heavens,

**And on earth, grace and peace to all people from God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, and  
the Holy Spirit – one God now and forever more. Amen.**

**Benediction Response – God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen<sup>xxvii</sup>**

God rest ye merry gentlemen - Let nothing you dismay.

Remember Christ our Savior Was born on Christmas Day

To save us all from Satan's pow'r When we were gone astray

O tidings of comfort and joy, Comfort and joy - O tidings of comfort and joy

In Bethlehem, in Israel This blessed Babe was born

And laid within a manger Upon this blessed morn

The which His Mother Mary Did nothing take in scorn

O tidings of comfort and joy, Comfort and joy. O tidings of comfort and joy

From God our Heavenly Father A blessed Angel came

And unto certain Shepherds Brought tidings of the same

How that in Bethlehem was born The Son of God by Name

O tidings of comfort and joy, Comfort and joy

O tidings of comfort and joy

The shepherds at those tidings Rejoiced much in mind

And left their flocks a-feeding In tempest, storm and wind

And went to Bethlehem straightway The Son of God to find

O tidings of comfort and joy, Comfort and joy

O tidings of comfort and joy

Now to the Lord sing praises All you within this place  
 And with true love and brotherhood Each other now embrace  
 This holy tide of Christmas All others doth deface  
 O tidings of comfort and joy, Comfort and joy  
 O tidings of comfort and joy

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<sup>i</sup> Luke 1:78, 79

<sup>ii</sup> Traditional English, setting by Chip Davis (Mannheim Steamroller)

<sup>iii</sup> Words Charles Wesley, Tune Welsh Hyfrydol by Rowland Hugh Prichard, arranged Keith Getty

<sup>iv</sup> Based on Isaiah 9, 61

<sup>v</sup> Based on Isaiah 11

<sup>vi</sup> Reading from Luke 4:18-21, Ephesians 2:14

<sup>vii</sup> What Child Is This – Words William Dix, Music - English Ballad 16<sup>th</sup> century, arr. Christmas Carols, New and Old, 1871;

<sup>viii</sup> Genesis 1:31-2:3

<sup>ix</sup> Job 38:4-7

<sup>x</sup> Words Charles Wesley, alt.; music Felix Mendelssohn – arr. William Cummings, Descant and Harmonization vs. 3 David Willcocks

<sup>xi</sup> Genesis 3:4-10

<sup>xii</sup> Romans 8:19-23

<sup>xiii</sup> I Corinthians 15:21

<sup>xiv</sup> Music by Gustav Holst and Antonin Dvorak, Words by Christiana Rossetti, Additional Words and Music by Keith Getty and Kristyn Getty

<sup>xv</sup> Isaiah 61:1-3T

<sup>xvi</sup> Matthew 1:18-23

<sup>xvii</sup> Traditional Scottish Tune, English words Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, Setting by Shoshanna Godber

<sup>xviii</sup> Isaiah 25:6-9

<sup>xix</sup> Isaiah 11:1-9

<sup>xx</sup> Words Placide Cappeau, translated John Dwight; Music Adolph Adam

<sup>xxi</sup> Malcolm Guite (Alt.)

<sup>xxii</sup> Words Joseph Mohr, translated John Young, music Franz Xaver Gruber

<sup>xxiii</sup> Traditional Irish (c. 12<sup>th</sup> Century)

<sup>xxiv</sup> Galatians 4:4-7

<sup>xxv</sup> Words Isaac Watts, Tune Lowell Mason, tune attributed to George Fedrick Handel

<sup>xxvi</sup> Cf. Luke 1:74, 75, 78,79; 2:14

<sup>xxvii</sup> Words and Music: English Traditional, Arranged by Keith Getty and Fionán De Barra