



First Presbyterian Church of London
Growing Together through Faith, Love, and Fellowship.

Christmas Eve

December 24, 2023

The asterisk () indicates to please rise in body or spirit.*

Silent Prayer of Preparation

Living God, on this holy night we gather—to stand with shepherds, amazed at your glory; to sing with angels, rejoicing in your work; to wait with Joseph, trusting in your promise; to sit with Mary, cradling your love. May the good news of this night inspire us to tell the world of our great joy: for to us is born a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord. Glory and praise to you forever! Amen.

The Gathering of God's People

Prelude - a time to prayerfully prepare oneself for worship

“Noël Basque”

Dom Paul Benoit (1893-1979)

Welcome

Introit

“Christmas Day Is Here”

arr. Harvey Gaul, 1912

Christmas day is here, Noel we gladly sing;

Christ the Lord is born, Noel, our Lord and King.

(refrain)

Sing we Noel, rejoice, give thanks and sing Noel,

‘In Bethlehem,’ said the prophecy,

‘You will find the Babe with Joseph and Mary.’ (refrain)

Lighting of the Advent Candles

Mark, Désirée, and Devin

Reader 1: We light the Christ candle to symbolize God's promise fulfilled.

Reader 2: 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. Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to all on whom his favor rests.

(The Christ candle is lit)

People: Blessed be the name of the Lord.

**O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant;
O come ye; O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come, and behold him, born the King of angels!**

(refrain)

**O come, let us adore him; O come, let us adore him;
O come, let us adore 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)

The Confession of Sin and Assurance of Pardon

***Call to Confession**

***Prayer of Confession**

Great and glorious God, through Jesus Christ our Savior you have shown us that the blessed age of grace has appeared and the hoped-for time of salvation has come. Yet we cling to the glories of the present age—worldly passions and impious pursuits, self-indulgent, crooked, and ungodly ways. We choose to walk in darkness, unwilling to see the evil that your light exposes. Cleanse us and free us; break the yoke we choose to carry. This we ask through Christ, who gave himself for us, so that we might be your people, holy and whole. Amen.

(Silent prayer of confession.)

***Assurance of Pardon**

Leader: Hear this good news of great joy: in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

People: **Thanks be to God!**

Leader: Glory to God in the highest,

People: **and peace to God’s people on earth.**

"Glo-ry to God in highest heaven, who un-to us the Christ has given." With
an-gels sing the Savior's birth, a glad new year to all the earth.

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Ministry of the Word

Prayer for Illumination

First Lesson

Isaiah 9:2

Carol

"Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" (verses 1 & 3)

#132

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!**

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave: Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!**

Second Lesson

Isaiah 9:3-5

*Carol

"It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" (verses 1 & 5)

#123

**It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven's all-gracious King":
the world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.**

**For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world give back the song which now the angels sing.**

Third Lesson

Isaiah 9:6

Carol “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” (verses 1 & 3) #119

**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 the angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn king!”
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.
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn king!”**

Fourth Lesson

Isaiah 9:7

***Carol** “What Child Is This” (verses 1 & 3) #145

**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;
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!
So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come, one and all, 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!**

Fifth Lesson

Luke 2:1-7

Choir Carol “We Wait the Peaceful Kingdom” arr. Michael Burkhardt, 2019

**We wait the peaceful kingdom, when wolf and lamb shall lie
In gentleness and friendship without a fear or sigh,
When lion shall be grazing, when snake shall never strike;
A little child shall lead us both strong and weak alike.
Where is the peaceful kingdom? When will this new day start?
We long for peace and comfort to reign within each heart.**

Yet not in our lives only, nor simply in our home:
We pray that all creation will one day find shalom.

When wars of desolation and hate come to an end,
When nation meets with nation and calls the other 'friend,'
Still peace in all its fullness will only have begun:
Shalom for all creation begins with justice done.

That little child shall lead us to walk the chosen way.
To share the peaceful kingdom, to greet God's newborn day.
The child born in a stable is sent to break our chains,
To bring through word and table the day when justice reigns. Amen.

Sixth Lesson

Luke 2:8-14

***Carol** "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks" (verses 1 & 6) #117

**While shepherds watched their flocks by night, all seated on the
ground,
the angel of the Lord came down, and glory shone around.**

**"All glory be to God on high, and to the earth be peace;
good will to all from highest heaven begin and never cease!"**

Seventh Lesson

Luke 2:15-20

Carol "Away in a Manger" (verses 1 & 2) #115

**Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

**The cattle are lowing; the poor baby wakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.**

**I love thee, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.**

Poem "Twas the Night before Census" by Rev. Dana Mayfield

Twas the night before census when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, except for that louse
He waited in laughter, the emperor was he
For all had to register, by his grand decree

Augustus was proud of the plan he had made
For the roll would predict how much tax would be paid

The people they came from the East and the West
To the city of David – Bethlehem – the best
I thought that my work had been done for the day
Yet the voice at the door had asked, “Can we stay?”
I explained all the rooms had been filled for the night
But the barn was still vacant – if that’d be all right
They were happy to sleep with the cows in the hay
For they’d come 80 miles by donkey today
The woman was pregnant, due soon I could tell
I wished she could rest in that fancy hotel

The shepherds were watching their flocks by the night
In hopes that the sheep would just stay home tonight
I went back to bed thinking, “now I can sleep”
But awoke once again to the sounds of the sheep
I looked out the window and all I could see
Was a star shining brightly, as bright as can be
When what to my wondering eyes should appear
But a babe wrapped in cloths in the trough over there

The mother was tired; it’d been a long night
The father’s face said, “Everything is all right”
The baby was hungry, he nursed right away
Then slept in the manger, ‘till first light of day

An angel appeared to the crudest of men
Those out in the fields, with the sheep, in the pen
Their job kept them from the clean water and soap
They could not keep clean, knowing not of God’s hope
The angel revealed the good news of the birth
This babe in the trough gave to all human worth
“Do not be afraid of this small baby boy.
Messiah is he and he brings you great joy!”

Soon more angels came and this choir of hosts
Sang of God’s promises we wanted the most
Their voices were sweet, they sang both high and low
They sang “Gloria in Excelsis Deo!”

Three men from the east had come rather far
They found their way here following yonder star
They brought gifts of myrrh, frankincense and some gold
For this child in a manger who wasn't that old!
Gifts for a king so all people could tell
This baby is now king of all Israel

The baby he loved each well-wisher who came
To seek the Messiah, not fortune or fame
The babe is God's son born for us on that night
A silent and holy night showed love's pure light
The radiant beams from his cute holy face
Told us the dawn of God's redeeming grace

Soon mother and father prepped baby to go
Their lives were now changed, oh the things they would know!
The donkey they brought when they came in to town
With the gifts and the babe was now loaded down
And I heard them exclaim as they rode out of sight
Merry Christmas to all and to all a Good Night!

***Carol**

“The First Nowell” (verses 1 and 3)

#147

**The first Nowell the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.**

(refrain)

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

**And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went. (refrain)**

The Response to the Word

***Affirmation of Faith**

“A Christmas Affirmation”

**I BELIEVE that Christmas is more than a time for parties and
ornaments; it is a time for remembering Christ and the incarnation of
God's love in human flesh.**

I BELIEVE there are gifts more important than the ones under the Christmas tree, the things we teach our children, the way we share ourselves with friends, and the industry with which we set about reshaping the world in our time.

I BELIEVE that the finest carols are often sung by the poorest voices; from hearts made warm by the wonder of the season.

I BELIEVE in the angel's message that we should not be afraid—that the Child of Bethlehem is able to overcome all anxieties and insecurities.

I BELIEVE in prayer and quietness as a way of appropriating Christmas—that if I wait in silence I will experience the presence of the one born in the manger, for he lives today as surely as he lived then.

I BELIEVE in going away from Christmas as the wise men went: “another way.” I want to be different when these days are past—more centered, more thoughtful, more caring.

AND I BELIEVE God will help me. Amen.

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

Leader: Wonderful Counselor,

People: we pray for wisdom for the world's leaders, that they may use their power to lift burdens and break the bonds of oppression.

Leader: Mighty God,

People: we pray for the church of Jesus Christ our Lord, that you will multiply and increase our joy as we share in the harvest you have gathered.

Leader: Everlasting Father,

People: we pray for families, friends, and loved ones, that those who now walk in deep darkness may see the great light of your saving love.

Leader: Prince of Peace,

People: we pray for an end to violence and warfare, that your authority may continue to grow until there is endless peace in every land.

Leader: Lord of hosts, establish your holy realm with justice and righteousness, from this time on and forevermore. And now we pray as Christ Jesus taught us:

People: 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.

Choir Carol “Emmanuel! God with Us!” Mary McDonald, 2020

Unto us a Son is given, the gift of God to us from heaven;
Born a child and yet a King, a Savior to redeem.

(refrain)

Emmanuel! God with us.

Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, The Son of God with us to dwell;

Light of life to all he brings: Alleluia, we sing! (refrain)

God will reign on earth forever and his kingdom never end.

Alleluia to our Savior, till he comes again! (refrain)

Invitation to Offering

***Response “Angels, from the Realms of Glory” (vs. 4) #143**

**All creation, join in praising
God the Father, Spirit, Son,
evermore your voices raising
to the eternal Three in One:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king!**

***Prayer of Dedication**

The Sending of God’s People

***Spreading the Light “Silent Night” #122**

(Please remain standing for the passing of the flame and for our final carol. Tip only your unlit candle when lighting from your neighbor’s candle.)

**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.**

**Silent night, holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light;
with the angels let us sing Alleluia to our King:
Christ the Savior is born; Christ the Savior is born.**

***Charge and Blessing**

(Please carefully extinguish your candles following the pastors' lead, hold them upright during the congregational response and the postlude so that the wax may harden, and then place them in the baskets by the door as you leave.)

***Congregational Response**

"Go, Tell It on the Mountain" (refrain)

#136

Go, tell it on the moun-tain, o-ver the hills and ev - erywhere;
go, tell it on the moun - tain that Je - sus Christ is born!

***Postlude**

"In Dulci Jubilo"

Marcel Dupré (1886-1971)

Pastors: Rev. Désirée M. Youngblood
Dr. Mark A. Johnson
Steve Watters

Music Director: Thomas Lloyd

Organist: Carol Welk

Trumpets: Claudia Bow, Steve Bow

Instrumentalists:

James Predovich, Harp

Laura Madden, Flute



Celebrate Jesus by

Holding the hand of someone you love.

Reflect on the blessings of the past year.

Inhale.

Slow down and

Take time to be

Mindful of this day and who you share it with.

As you join in the traditions,

Savor them,

Each taste, aroma, emotion, gift.

Voice your love. Share your hope. Because Jesus is

Enough.

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