

A Service For The Worship Of God
Christmas Eve & Holy Communion Candle Light Service

Leader: The Lord Be With You

People: And Also With You

Leader: Let us begin our worship with a moment of silence.

Moment Of Silence

Lighting The Christ Candle

Choral Intro

Responsive Reading

The Angels' Message: Welcome

Leader: Tonight we gather with joyful hearts to receive God's greatest gift.

People: Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

Leader: Tonight we hear again the good news that was given for all people.

People: Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

Leader: Tonight we join in steadfast wonder at God's amazing love.

People: Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

Leader: Tonight we welcome the Savior whose birth has forever changed our lives.

People: Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

Candle Lighting

Choral Response

Closing Prayer

Hymn #31

Hark, the Herald Angels

First Reading: God, Revealed in Creation (Acts 17: 22– 34a)

The apostle Paul visits the Greek city of Athens, debates with philosophers, and proclaims the one true God. "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, ... who is the ruler of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, but is the universal giver of life and breath— indeed, of everything. God made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and allotted the times of their existence, and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for

God and find God— though indeed God is not far from each one of us. For ‘In God we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now God commands all people everywhere to repent, because God has fixed a day on which God will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom God has appointed, and of this God has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, “We will hear you again about this.” At that point Paul left them. But some joined him and became believers.

Here ends our reading. Good Christian friends, rejoice! Now ye need not fear the grave. Jesus Christ was born to save!

Hymn #28

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice!

Second Reading: Rescuing a World Gone Wrong (Romans 7: 14–25; 8: 1– 2)

The apostle Paul proclaims that we live in a world gone wrong, where humankind has gone astray from God, and we can’t put ourselves right, or the world right, even when we want to.

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that God’s law is good.... I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.... So, I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in myself another law at war with the law of my mind, ... Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Here ends our reading. Joy to the world, the Lord is come. Let heaven and nature sing! The living Christ can change the world and break the curse of sin. Thanks be to God!

Hymn #40

Joy to the World

Show Us Who You Are ...

Long before Jesus was born, God's Holy Name was revealed to the people of Israel. Today, Christians, Muslims, and Jews worship One God but have different stories. Our story as Christians is founded on the story of the Jews because Jesus expressed what his people already knew about God. Our next three readings show us part of what they knew.

Third Reading: Compassionate and Forgiving (Psalm 103: 1– 12)

Listen to an ancient song of praise that tells of God's unfailing love:

Bless the Living God, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless God's holy name. Bless the living God, O my soul, and remember all God's benefits— who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. It is God who works vindication, and justice for all who are oppressed.... The Living God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is God's steadfast love to all who come with reverence; as far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our transgressions from us.

Here ends our reading. May the holy child of Bethlehem cast out our sin, enter in, and be born in us today.

Hymn #43

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Fourth Reading: Putting Wrongs Right (Psalm 146)

From the songs of ancient Israel, we learn that God is not only awesome, but also active; not neutral, but involved; not a detached creator, but God among us, longing to see justice done and the humble lifted high:

Praise God, O my soul! I will praise God as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long. Do not put your trust in rulers, in mortals, in whom there is no help. When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish. Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry., and sets the prisoners free; who opens the eyes of the blind, and lifts up those who are bowed down; God loves those who do justice, and watches

over the strangers; God upholds the orphan and the widow, but brings to ruin the way of the wicked.

Here ends our reading. Let us pray, and work, and hope for justice, kindness, and “peace on earth, goodwill to all.”

Hymn #38

It Came upon the Midnight Clear

Fifth Reading: Working with Gentle Perseverance (Isaiah 42: 1– 4)

The prophet Isaiah proclaims God’s chosen One, whose gentle strength will put things right.

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one, in whom I take delight! I have put my spirit on him; he will establish justice among the nations. He will not shout or raise his voice or make himself heard in the street. He will not break a crushed reed or snuff out a smoldering wick; unfailingly he will establish justice. He will never falter or be crushed until he sets justice on earth, while coasts and islands await his teaching.

Here ends our reading. May God give us the gentle strength of persevering love.

In a Human Face Introduction

We believe that in Jesus of Nazareth, the Great Holy One, creator of the universe, came to be with us, as one of us, not just to be seen and touched and known, but to do something, to make a difference: to us and to the whole world. So we shall hear how Jesus was born, what kind of person he became, and what his life reveals to us.

Sixth Reading: Born among Us (Luke 2: 1– 8)

The Gospel of Luke tells how Jesus was born, and who greeted him:

In those days a decree was issued by the emperor Augustus for a census to be taken throughout the Roman world. This was the first registration of its kind; it took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone made their way to their own towns to be registered. Joseph went up to Judea from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to register in the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was of the house of David by descent; and with him went Mary, his betrothed, who was expecting her child. While they were there the time came for her to have her baby, and she gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for

them at the inn. Now in this same district there were shepherds out in the fields, keeping watch through the night over their flock.

Here ends our reading. Let us now sing the story of the shepherds, the angels, and the glorious good news.

Hymn #58

While Shepherds Watched

Seventh Reading: Teacher, Healer, Friend (Luke 13: 10– 17)

Here is a story from the Gospel of Luke. It shows us what Jesus was like when he grew up:

Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day.” But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?” When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

Here ends our reading. Let us rejoice that God has come to us, not with glamour, power, and wealth, but through Jesus, showing us God, with a human face.

Hymn #37

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Eighth Reading: A Light for All Nations (Matthew 2: 1– 12)

Matthew tells how a group of wise seekers, from a distant land and another religion, come to greet the Christ Child, as the light who shines for the entire world.

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem

with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Here ends our reading. Let us sing the story of the seekers who followed a star.

Hymn #56

The First Noel

Ninth Reading: Seen, Heard, Touched, and Known (1 John 1: 1–4; John 1: 10–18)
In his first letter, and also in his Gospel, John shows us the meaning of Jesus' birth, life, death, and living presence:

We declare what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. For the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made God known.

Offering (let us present our Offerings, Tithes and Gifts to the Lord)

Prayer of Dedication

Offertory

*Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise Him, all creatures here below.

Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host.

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Call To Confession

Prayer of Confession (in unison)

O Holy God, who surrounds our lives with grace, we confess that our eyes are dull. Your presence in our lives takes us by surprise. We see only the outer signs: the baby, the feeding-place for animals, the tired mother and father. Help us to know you, not only in the angel's song, but in the ordinary happenings of our lives, that we may be channels of your grace in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Gloria Patri (Glory be to the Father)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Holy Communion

Invitation to the Lord's Table (all who proclaim Jesus as Lord and Savior are invited to participate in this meal)

Distribution of the Elements (you are invited to come forward down the center isle take a piece of bread from the common loaf and dip it into the cup returning down the side isle)

The Lord's Prayer (in unison)

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.

The Light

Let us receive the light of Christ, and share it with our neighbors and then the world

Hymn

1. Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon virgin mother and child!
afar,
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.
3. 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

2. Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven

Heavenly hosts sing: "Alleluia;
Christ the Savior is born,
Christ the Savior is born."
4. 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.

Tonight's Advent Readers: Diane Meester & Jennifer McCullough

Ushers: Randy & Jan Zweerink