
St. Paul's Episcopal Church



*The Eve of the Feast of the
Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ*

*December 24, 2020
Online*

The Eve of the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

GREETING

PRELUDE

Angels From the Realm of Glory
What Child is This, *Emily Dorosz, soloist*

CALL TO WORSHIP

Marci Mouer and Stacy Huntt

This year, we dreamed of world peace.

We dreamed of deep breaths and restful sleep.

We dreamed of love that lasts and suffering that passes.

We dreamed of doors open wide and a cure to disease.

We dreamed, because to dream is to believe.

For to dream is to hope; to dream is to see.

So make room in your being to dream yet again,

Of a world without fear, and a God that draws near.

For it is Christmas. Love is here.

May we dream to see, and hope to believe.

OPENING HYMN

O Come All Ye Faithful
verses 1, 3, 6

Adeste Fideles

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!

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation;
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God,
Glory in the highest;

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n;
Word of the Father, now in
flesh appearing

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
Christ the Lord

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
Christ the Lord

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
Christ the Lord

OPENING SALUTATION

Officiant Blessed be the one, holy, and living God.

People **Glory to God for ever and ever.**

Officiant **Let us pray. Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord.**

Amen. *Words captioned on screen*

In the beginning, God dreamed of a beautiful world.

In Egypt, the Israelites dreamed of freedom.

In the wilderness, the people dreamed of safety.

In Jerusalem, the people dreamed of a Messiah.

In Bethlehem, the shepherds and Wise Men dreamed of a new beginning.

Then, several years later, Jesus walked this earth and dreams came true.

The sick were healed.

The poor had food.

The forgotten and ignored were seen.

The children were welcomed.

Everyone was invited to the table, and the world has never been the same.

So tonight, we are those who dream.

Tonight, we dream the same dreams of our ancestors before us.

Tonight, we dream of justice and mercy, of love and kindness, of peace and hope.

Tonight we dream of a God that draws near to us out of unfailing love.

We light the Christ candle to testify to the day when every dream will be fulfilled. And until then, we will be those who dream.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Officiant Let us pray.

Holy God,

If we listen closely, we can almost hear the angels sing.

If we listen closely, we can almost hear the bleats of sheep following shepherds,
and the hooves of confused barn animals.

If we listen closely, we can almost hear the innkeeper say, "No room."

If we listen closely, we can almost hear the star whisper, "Follow me."

If we listen closely, God, we can almost hear you.

So as we turn to your Word, Holy Writer, don't let us miss a thing—

The smell of the hay, the cool of the air, the way Mary cherished this wild dream in her heart.

We want to hear it all; we don't want to miss a thing.

So tonight we pray—can you help us listen closely? **Amen.**

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Isaiah 9:2-7

Jim Hunter

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.

You have made the nation great; you have increased its joy.

They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest, as those who divide plunder rejoice.

As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke that burdened them,

the staff on their shoulders, and the rod of their oppressor.

Because every boot of the thundering warriors,

and every garment rolled in blood will be burned, fuel for the fire.
A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his shoulders.
He will be named: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be vast authority and endless peace for David's throne and for his kingdom,
establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness now and forever.
The zeal of the Lord of heavenly forces will do this.

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People **Thanks be to God.**

THE PSALM

Psalm 96

Page & Claire Hamilton

Sing to GOD a new song; sing to GOD, all the whole earth.

Sing and bless God's holy Name; proclaim the good news of salvation from day to day.

Declare God's glory among the nations, God's wonders among all peoples.

For God is great and greatly to be praised, more to be feared than all gods.

As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols; but it is God who made the heavens.

Oh, the majesty and magnificence of God's presence!

Oh, the power and the splendor of God's sanctuary!

Ascribe to God you families of the peoples; ascribe to God honor and power.

Ascribe to God the honor due God's holy Name; bring offerings and come into God's courts.

Worship the MOST HIGH in the beauty of holiness; let the whole earth tremble before God.

Tell it out among the nations that God reigns.

God has made the world so firm that it cannot be moved and will judge the peoples with equity."

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder and all that is in it; *

let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy before God who will come to judge the earth.

God will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with truth.

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

GOSPEL HYMN

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

v. 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 angelic hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King"

Deacon The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what

the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Deacon The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

GOSPEL HYMN*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

v. 2

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of the Virgin's womb:
veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail the incarnate Deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel.

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King"

THE HOMILY

The Rev. Dr. Maria A. Kane

O little town of Bethlehem,
 how still we see thee lie
 Above thy deep and dreamless
 sleep the silent stars go by
 Yet in thy dark streets shineth,
 the everlasting light
 The hopes and fears of all the
 years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary,
 and gathered all above,
 while mortals sleep, the angels
 keep
 their watch of wond'ring love.
 O morning stars, together
 proclaim the holy birth!
 And praises sing—let "Glory!" ring
 with peace to all on earth!

O holy Child of Bethlehem,
 descend to us, we pray,
 cast out our sin, and enter in,
 be born in us today!
 We hear the Christmas angels
 the great glad tidings tell.
 O come to us, abide with us,
 our Lord Emmanuel.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Trevor, Zach, and Delana Bryant

We believe in hope.

We believe that to hope is to dream with our eyes wide open.

We believe in peace.

We believe that peace is not found by accident. Prepare the way.

We believe in joy.

**We believe that joy is angel choruses and gifts from the Magi,
 As well as soul food, big tables,
 Open doors, candle light, fireside,
 Singing in the shower, and the body of Christ gathered as one.**

We believe in love.

**We believe that God loves us so much that God could not stay away. So God showed up as a child.
 We believe that that love is real, and we know that it changes us.**

Therefore, we believe in the power of dreams,

**And we believe that nightmares, which are all too real here and now,
 will have no place in God's promised day.**

Until then,

**we believe in passing the light,
 in showing up, in doing the work,
 in listening for angel choruses, and in learning from the youngest among us.**

We believe in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who was and is and is to come.

We believe. Help our unbelief. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Intercessor

On this holy night your Son our Saviour was born in human flesh. Renew your Church as the Body of Christ.
 Holy God,
hear our prayer.

On this holy night there was no room for your Son in the inn. Protect with your love those who have no home and all who live in poverty.

Holy God,
hear our prayer.

On this holy night Mary, in the pain of labor brought your Son to birth. Hold in your hand all who are in pain or distress.

Holy God,

hear our prayer.

On this holy night your Christ came as a light shining in the darkness. Bring comfort to all who suffer in the sadness and grief of our world.

Holy God,

hear our prayer.

On this holy night the angels sang, 'Peace to God's people on earth.' Strengthen those who work for peace and justice in our nation and in all the world.

Holy God,

hear our prayer.

On this holy night shepherds in the field heard good tidings of joy. Give us grace to preach the gospel of Christ's redemption in word and in deed.

Holy God,

hear our prayer.

On this holy night strangers found the Holy Family, and saw the baby lying in the manger. Bless our homes and all whom we love with your tender mercy and peace.

Holy God,

hear our prayer.

On this holy night heaven is come down to earth, and earth is raised to heaven. Hold in your hand all those who have passed through death in the hope of your coming kingdom.

Holy God,

hear our prayer.

On this holy night people all over the world celebrate Christ's birth. Open our hearts that he may be born in us today.

Holy God,

hear our prayer.

The Officiant will add a concluding prayer.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray the prayer our Lord Jesus Christ, taught us:

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, for ever and ever. Amen.

CAROL

Angels, we have heard on high

Angels we have heard on high,
singing sweetly through the night,
and the mountains in reply
echoing their brave delight.
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.

THE PEACE

Officiant

Hear the Good News: The true light that enlightens all has come into the world. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to put it out. Because of that light, nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God made known to us tonight and poured out upon the earth through the Spirit.
The peace of the Lord be always with you.

THE GOSPEL OF LIGHT

Officiant

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. And the Word became flesh and lived among us.

HYMN OF LIGHT

Silent Night

+RECESSIONAL HYMN

Joy to the World!

vv. 1,3,4

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her king;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature
sing.

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.

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.

THE BLESSING

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*The Most Reverend Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church
The Rt. Reverend Mariann Edgar Budde, Bishop of Washington
The Rt. Reverend Chilton Knudsen, Assisting Bishop of Washington*

4535 Piney Church Road • Waldorf, MD 20602
www.stpaulswaldorf.org
Main Office: (301) 645-5000
Pastoral Emergencies: (301) 535-4567

Tonight's service was patiently recorded by Barry Hamilton.

The candles in the church windows have been donated by Phil and Judy Hamilton in thanksgiving for their sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren.

The lights adorning our grounds have been generously donated by:

The St. Paul's Cemetery Committee;

*Phil & Judy Hamilton in thanksgiving for their sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren; and,
Joyce Scofield in honor of her daughter Michelle and her sons Matthew and Brett and their families.*

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