

Christmas Eve

4:30PM, December 24, 2023

Carol Sing

O Come, all ye faithful

Hymnal #83, verses 1 & 3

**I 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;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

**3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation!
O sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above;
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

Angels we have heard on high

Hymnal #96, v. 1 & 3

**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 Christ whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!**

Silent Night

Hymnal #111, verses 1 & 2

**I 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.**

**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.**

**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.**

**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.**

Opening Acclamation

Officiant 'Do I not fill heaven and earth?' says the Lord.

All **Now the Word is made flesh and laid in a narrow manger.**

Officiant From eternity to eternity you are God,

All **and now we see you as a newborn child.**

Officiant O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen.**

The four Advent candles and the Christmas candle are lit.

First Poem: Welcome

Making the House Ready for the Lord (Mary Oliver, 1935 - 2019)

Dear Lord, I have swept and I have washed but
still nothing is as shining as it should be
for you. Under the sink, for example, is an
uproar of mice—it is the season of their
many children. What shall I do? And under the eaves
and through the walls the squirrels
have gnawed their ragged entrances—but it is the season
when they need shelter, so what shall I do? And
the raccoon limps into the kitchen and opens the cupboard
while the dog snores, the cat hugs the pillow;
what shall I do? Beautiful is the new snow falling
in the yard and the fox who is staring boldly
up the path, to the door. And I still believe you will
come, Lord: you will, when I speak to the fox,
the sparrow, the lost dog, the shivering sea-goose, know

that really I am speaking to you whenever I say,
as I do all morning and afternoon: Come in, Come in.

The First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

Reader A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. 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. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Reader The word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Second Poem: Arrival

Advent Calendar (Rowan Williams, b. 1950)

He will come like last leaf's fall.
One night when the November wind
has flayed the trees to the bone, and earth
wakes choking on the mould,
the soft shroud's folding.

He will come like frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
opens on mist, to find itself
arrested in the net
of alien, sword-set beauty.

He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red
December sun draws up the sheet
and penny-masks its eye to yield
the star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come,
will come like crying in the night,
like blood, like breaking,

as the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like child.

The Christmas Gospel, Part I

Reader A reading from the Gospel of Luke.

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.

Third and Fourth Poems: The Parents

Mary's Song (Luci Shaw, b. 1928)

Blue homespun and the bend of my breast
keep warm this small hot naked star
fallen to my arms. (Rest ...
you who have had so far to come.)
Now nearness satisfies
the body of God sweetly. Quiet he lies
whose vigor hurled a universe. He sleeps
whose eyelids have not closed before.
His breath (so slight it seems
no breath at all) once ruffled the dark deeps
to sprout a world. Charmed by doves' voices,
the whisper of straw, he dreams,
hearing no music from his other spheres.
Breath, mouth, ears, eyes
he is curtailed who overflowed all skies,
all years. Older than eternity, now he
is new. Now native to earth as I am, nailed
to my poor planet, caught
that I might be free, blind in my womb
to know my darkness ended,
brought to this birth for me to be new-born,
and for him to see me mended
I must see him torn.

Joseph at the Nativity (Tania Runyan, b. 1973)

Of any birth, I thought this
would be a clean one,
like pulling white linen
from a loom.

But when I return to the cave,
Mary throws her cloak
over the bloody straw and cries.
I know she wants me to leave.

There he lies, stomach rising
and falling, a shriveled pod
that does nothing but stare
at the edge of the feeding trough
with dark, unsteady eyes.

Is he God enough
to know that I am poor,
that we had no time
for a midwife, that swine
ate from his bed this morning?

If the angel was right, he knows.
He knows that Mary's swell
embarrassed me, that I was jealous
of her secret skyward smiles,
that now I want to run into these hills
and never come back.

*Peace, peace, I've heard in my dreams.
This child will make you right.*

But I can only stand here,
not a husband, not a father,
my hands hanging dumbly
at my sides. Do I touch him,
this child who is mine
and not mine? Do I enter
the kingdom of blood and stars?

The Christmas Gospel, Part II

Reader

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.

Fifth Poems: Angel

Angel at the Nativity (Tania Runyan, b. 1973)

Oh, God, I am heavy
with glory. My head thunders
from singing in the hills.

This night will come once.
Enough bright lights.
Enough shouting
at the shepherds in the fields.

Let me slip into the stable
and crouch among
the rooting swine.
Let me close my eyes
and feel the child's breath,
this wind that blows
through the mountains and stars,
lifting my weary wings.

The Prayers

Officiant We now enter a time of prayer. You may wish to bow your head, open your hands, or prepare your body for prayer in some other way.

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Officiant Now, let us pray as God's beloved children, using the prayer Jesus taught us.

The Lord's Prayer

The Prayers of the People

The people respond with the text in bold.

Officiant In peace let us pray to the Lord.

In 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,

People **hear our prayer.**

Officiant In this holy night your Christ came as a light shining in the darkness.

Bring comfort to all who suffer in the sadness of our world,

especially those whom we name now, out loud or in our hearts:

The people may name those who are suffering.

Officiant Holy God,

People **hear our prayer.**

Officiant In 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 the world.

Holy God,

People **hear our prayer.**

Officiant In this holy night strangers welcomed the Holy Family. Bless our homes and all those with whom we share our lives, and help us show kindness whenever we can.

Holy God,

People **hear our prayer.**

Officiant In 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, especially those whom we miss tonight:

The people may name their beloved dead.

Officiant Holy God,

People **hear our prayer.**

Officiant In this holy night Christians the world over celebrate Christ's birth.
Open our hearts that God may be born in us today.
Holy God,
People **hear our prayer.**

Officiant Loving God, in this holy night angels and shepherds worshipped the newborn King. Receive the worship we offer in fellowship with Mary, Joseph and the saints through the One who is your Word made flesh, our Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Peace

Celebrant Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace. The peace of the Lord be always with you!
All **And also with you!**

Announcements

Sixth Poem: Good News

The Last Word (G.K. Chesterton, 1874 - 1936)

Good news; but if you ask me what it is, I know not;
It is a track of feet in the snow,
It is a lantern showing a path,
It is a door set open.

The Blessing

Celebrant May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise ones, the willingness of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ-child be yours this Christmas; and the blessing of God the holy and undivided Trinity, the One who creates, befriends, and inspires, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Officiant Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!
People **Thanks be to God!**