

Eastminster Presbyterian Church

SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

Christmas Eve

December 24, 2020

GATHERING AROUND GOD'S WORD

VOLUNTARY

Unto to Us a Child is Born
Melody Davis

Arr. Wolver

OPENING CAROL 133 *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

OPENING SENTENCES AND LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

In Advent each week we have pointed the way to Christmas. Hope, love, joy, and peace are the touchstones in our journey preparing our hearts. We are grateful for all the days carrying us to this holy night. And so we come to the eve of Christmas once again, as have those before us through the centuries, the mighty cloud of witnesses who have lighted our way with their lives of faith, hope and love against all odds.

May the lights we burn tonight warm us with memories of their inspiration and their aspirations.

Hope, love, joy and peace which never come easy and are easily lost—all come together this night in the freeing spirit of God. May God's light heal our lives and world.

And may this light, on this special night of birth, remind us that to be in the spirit of Christmas we must be where peace needs to be born, where joy needs to be sung, where love needs to be shared, and where hope needs to be found. We light these candles once again in this Season which reminds us how to live most fully all our days. We light these candles to proclaim the coming of the light of God into the world. With the coming of this light let there be hope. Let there be love. Let there be joy. Let there be peace! And may the light of Christ be in and among us all!

MEDLEY OF CAROLS 119 *Hark the Herald Angels Sing (verses 1, 3)*

123 It Came Upon a Midnight Clear (verses 1, 5)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S GIFT OF FORGIVENESS THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

Gracious and loving God, we acknowledge to you, to one another, and to ourselves that we are not all you have called us to be. Have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and help us to live our lives differently, for we long for peace within and without, for harmony in our families, for the well-being of our neighbors, and the love for our enemies. Show us how to walk in the light of your path of faithfulness, hope, and love. Amen.

(Time for Silent Reflection)

One fact remains that does not change: God has loved all, loves all now, and will love all

now always, for all time. Thanks be to God for the gift of the Baby of Bethlehem, whose light brings joy and peace to us in these moments of forgiveness and in all the days to come. Amen.

RESPONSE 113 *Angels We Have Heard on High* (Refrain Only)

PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Loving and generous God, we praise and thank you for the joys of this Christmas: the music and the singing, the gathering of family and friends, the gifts we give and receive. We thank you most of all for your great gift to us - the child Jesus. As we listen for your Word to us tonight, may Christ's Spirit of love and light fill our hearts to overflowing. May Christ's Spirit of peace be upon everyone, everywhere. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT READING (*Pew Bible, page 638*)

Isaiah 9: 2-7

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. ³You 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. ⁴For 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. ⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. ⁶For 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. ⁷His 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.

ANTHEM

Hope is Born Tonight
Sanctuary Choir

Larry Shackley

THE CHRISTMAS GOSPEL (*Pew Bible, page 58*)

Luke 2: 1-20

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph 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. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And 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. ⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be

afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” ¹⁵When 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.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

SERMON

What Has the Spirit Spoken to You?

Sherry Holloman

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We affirm that Jesus was born of woman as is every child, yet born of God’s power as was no other child. In the person and work of Jesus, God himself and a human life are united but not confused, distinguished but not separated. The coming of Jesus was itself the coming of God’s promised rule. Through his birth, life, death and resurrection, he brings about the relationship between God and humanity that God always intended. With thanksgiving to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, this we believe. Amen.

OFFERTORY SENTENCE

It was cold and Mary and Joseph were fearful, but that didn’t stop the birth of Jesus. They were poor and had no place fitting for their child, but that did not stop the birth of Jesus. They were uncertain about what God wanted from them, but that did not stop the birth of Jesus. Today we are still sometimes cold, and fearful, and certainly poor in many ways. We often feel we have no place and are unclear about what God wants of us. But these things did not stop the birth of Jesus then, nor will they stop his rebirth in our hearts each and every day. May the Lord Jesus be born again, this night in our hearts as we offer our thanksgiving.

PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY

This Holy Night

Mary McDonald

Michele Pappas, Soloist and Carlos Vargas, Cello and Sanctuary Choir

RESPONSE 143 *Angels from the Realm of Glory* (verse 4)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Like Mary and Joseph, who trusted in your grace, we offer ourselves and our gifts to you. Bless our offering, our every thought and our every action, that Christ may be revealed through them to the world that is yet in darkness. Amen.

SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

This sacrament is not the possession of this congregation nor of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Lord welcomes you. We welcome you. All persons are invited to receive the sacrament.

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

Jesus said I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. And they said, Lord, when did we do this? And he said, you did this for me when you did it for the least of these. Here is the bread of life, food for the spirit. Let all who hunger come and eat, remembering this is your body given for us. Here is the fruit of the vine pressed and poured out for us. Let all who thirst now come and drink, remembering this is the cup of the new covenant, your blood poured out for us for the forgiveness of sin. We come to make peace. We come to be restored in the love of God. We come to be made new as an instrument of that love. All are worthy. All are welcome.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Lord of light and dark, you crept into chaos so long ago, so creation might be born. Silently, you gathered up the dust, shaping us in your image as the Spirit breathed life into us. All the gifts of your heart were for us, but we slammed the door of our hearts, saying there was no room for you in our lives. Prophets came time and again, scattering your clues throughout the story of light, but we were too busy enjoying the dark of sin and death. When you saw we could not understand the Mystery on our own, you sent Jesus, the Light, to reveal everything to us. So, as we gather in the glow of the lights that are Christ surrounding us, we join our voices and sing praises to you this night

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

RESPONSE

Blessing, Honor, Glory
Sanctuary Choir

Leaving your side, God of holiness, your child came to walk with us through the cold streets of our lives. Born in poverty's shadows, he is the light which illumines your heart for us. Unwrapped from glory's embrace, he gathers us from all the corners of our confused choices to make us one with you. Placed in a rude feeding trough layered with

our fears and doubts, he breathes in your hope and lives your will, until he is placed in death's cold embrace, waiting in the dark, where he breathes in resurrection's breath, and brings forth life for all who follow. On this night, when we sing of the baby in the manger, as the shadow of the cross is cast by the stars, we proclaim that mystery called incarnation: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

RESPONSE

*O Lamb of God
Sanctuary Choir*

Here in the silence and the singing, carols, and candlelight, we gather around the table of joy, as you pour out your Spirit upon the most precious gifts of bread and cup. And we look forward to that time when we will be gathered with our sisters and brothers from every corner of your world to join the angels as we dance to the heavenly table of wonder and grace.

O God, in the loving and liberating spirit of Jesus, we gather at this welcoming table open to all, remembering how Jesus gathered people from all the walks of life, stranger and friend and enemies, gave thanks to you, offered all the bread of life and the cup of blessing and proclaimed a covenant of love for all in your name. Help us to remember with this meal especially all those who are hungry, and may we treat all our meals as sacred and to be shared. Take us, bless us, so that even in and with our brokenness we may serve others. And now praying together the prayer our Lord has 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever, and ever. Amen.**

BREAKING BREAD AND POURING CUP (in silence)

RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENT

COMMUNION CAROL 128 *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord, may we remember that in our times of hunger and brokenness, coming from the body and the spirit, that you provide wholeness and abundant gifts of peace, joy, love, hope and light all around us, among us, and within us all, more than enough to share with others. Amen

SHARING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

Jesus is the light of the world. As his followers we are called to receive his light and carry him into the darkness of today. From this light, may God's love for all humanity, be born in us tonight. May the love that forgives and transforms be born in us tonight. May

the love which overcomes division and creates understanding shine through us tonight. May the love that brings the blessing of peace be the light we share and pass on to others. Watch the light grow as each of us receives and shares the light of Christ.

CAROL 122

Silent Night, Holy Night

DISMISSAL AND BENEDICTION

Light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it, proclaims the ancient word; light stands firm against the dark landscape of reality, warmth prances in rooms too long drafty. Each of us holding a flickering candle; seemingly insignificant one by one, yet magnificent when held together. Each of us making a choice to stand in the light, proclaiming the indisputable presence of unquenchable light. Light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

CLOSING CAROL 134

Joy to the World