

# Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols

December 24, 2023



*"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."*

**- Isaiah 9:2**

Calvary United Methodist Church  
West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship

# GATHERING THE LIGHT

## Prelude

### Welcome / Greeting

**Gathering Song:** "May I Be Empty" (*Batya Levine*)

May I be empty  
And open to receive the light  
May I be empty  
And open to receive  
May I be full  
And open to receive the light  
May I be full  
And open to receive

### Call to Worship / Lighting the Christ Candle

Reader 1: God of hope, peace, joy and love, we wait.  
We remember. We ready ourselves. We pray.

**ALL (sung): O come, o come, Emmanuel ...**

Reader 2: We have prayed this Advent season for hope, for peace, for joy, for love. As we light this candle, we pray Christ. Christ who brings hope. Christ who brings peace. Christ who brings joy. Christ who brings love.

**ALL (sung): O come, o come, Emmanuel ...**

Reader 1: Christ who shows us the Way to hope, to peace, to joy, to love.

**ALL (sung): O come, o come, Emmanuel ...**

Reader 2: Christ who has already come. Christ who is yet coming. Christ who is God with us.

**ALL (sung): O come, o come, Emmanuel ...**

Reader 1: Christ who is light, that we may be light.

**ALL (sung): Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to us  
and in our hearts will dwell.**

Reader 2: Alleluia!

**ALL: Alleluia!**

**Opening Hymn:** "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the Son of God appear.

**Rejoice! Rejoice!**

**Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
our spirits by thy justice here;  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
and death's dark shadows put to flight. *(refrain)*

**LESSONS & CAROLS**

**Prayer** *(George Dupuy)*

**Lesson:** Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

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. ...

**6** 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 Creator, Prince of Peace. **7** His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his reign. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the God of hosts will do this.

**Lesson:** Isaiah 11:1-9

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. **2** The spirit of the Holy One shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Holy One. **3** His delight shall be in the fear of the Holy One. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; **4** but

with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; ... **5** Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. **6** The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. **7** The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. **8** The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. **9** They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Holy One as the waters cover the sea.

**Carol:** "We'll Be at Home"

Come, God, renew the earth; bring us your peace.  
Let war be learned no more, all conflicts cease.  
Let lambs with wolves lie down, in safety all be found.  
We'll be at home in your shalom.

Come, God, renew our world; all things refresh.  
Touch every wound and heal, broken ones bless.  
Blind eyes with sight be found,  
mute tongues with praise abound.  
We'll be at home in your shalom.

Come, God, renew our lives; give us your grace.  
Touch every heart until all know your face.  
Earth's every good we'll share, for one another care.  
We'll be at home, in your shalom.

Come, God, renew all things; grant a new start.  
Unlock the chains we wear; open our hearts.  
Grant each a welcome place, a friend in every face.  
We'll be at home in your shalom.

**Lesson:** Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, **27** to a virgin engaged

to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. **28** And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! God is with you." **29** But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. **30** The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. **31** And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. **32** He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Holy One will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. **33** He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his reign there will be no end." **34** Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" **35** The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. **36** And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. **37** For nothing will be impossible with God." **38** Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of God; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

**Carol:** "To a Maid Engaged to Joseph"

To a maid engaged to Joseph, the angel Gabriel came.  
"Fear not," the angel told her,  
"I come to bring good news,  
goods news I come to tell you,  
good news, I say, good news.

"For you are highly favored by God the Lord of all,  
who even now is with you.  
You are on earth most blest,  
you are most blest, most blessed,  
God chose you, you are blest!"

**Lesson:** Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Holy One, **47** and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, **48** for God has looked with favor on the lowliness of God's servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; **49** for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is God's name. **50** God's mercy is for those who fear God from generation to generation. **51** God has shown strength with God's arm; God has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. **52** God has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; **53** God has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. **54** God has helped God's servant Israel, in remembrance of God's mercy, **55** according to the promise God made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

**Reflection:** "Gabriel's Annunciation" (*Jan Richardson*)

**Carol:** "Canticle of the Turning"

My soul cries out with a joyful shout  
that the God of my heart is great,  
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things  
that you bring to the ones who wait.  
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,  
and my weakness you did not spurn,  
so from east to west shall my name be blest,  
could the world be about to turn?

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring,  
let the fires of your justice burn.  
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,  
and the world is about to turn!**

Though I am small, my God, my all,  
you work great things in me.  
And your mercy will last from the depths of the past  
to the end of the age to be.

Your very name puts the proud to shame,  
and to those who would for you yearn,  
you will show your might, put the strong to flight,  
for the world is about to turn. *(refrain)*

From the halls of power to the fortress tower,  
not a stone will be left on stone.

Let the king beware for your justice tears  
ev'ry tyrant from his throne.

The hungry poor shall weep no more,  
for the food they can never earn;  
there are tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed,  
for the world is about to turn.

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring,  
let the fires of your justice burn.**

**Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,  
and the world is about to turn!**

Though the nations rage from age to age,  
we remember who holds us fast;

God's mercy must deliver us  
from the conqueror's crushing grasp.

This saving word that out forebears heard  
is the promise which holds us bound,

'til the spear and rod be crushed by God,  
who is turning the world around. *(refrain)*

**Lesson:** Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. **19** Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. **20** But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of God appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child

conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." **22** All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by God through the prophet: **23** "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." **24** When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of God commanded him; he took her as his wife, **25** but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

**Lesson:** Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. **2** This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3** All went to their own towns to be registered. **4** 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. **5** He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. **6** While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. **7** 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.

**Carol:** "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

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.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given;  
so God imparts to human hearts  
the blessings of God's heaven.



No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him, still  
the dear Christ enters in.

**Carol:** "O Come All Ye Faithful"

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.**

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;  
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest. (*refrain*)

**Lesson:** Luke 2:8-15

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** Then an angel of God stood before them, and the glory of God shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** 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: **11** to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Christ, the Messiah. **12** This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." **13** And 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, goodwill among people!" **15** 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 Holy One has made known to us."

**Carol:** "Angels We Have Heard on High"

Angels we have heard on high  
sweetly singing o'er the plains,

and the mountains in reply  
echoing their joyous strains.

**Glo - ria, in excelsis Deo! Glo - ria, in excelsis Deo!**

Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be  
which inspire your heavenly song? (*refrain*)

**Carol:** "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing"

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 triumphs of the skies;  
with th' angelic host proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

**Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn king!"**

Christ, by highest heaven adored;  
Christ, the everlasting Lord;  
late in time behold him come,  
offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
hail the incarnate Deity,  
pleased with us in flesh to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel. (*refrain*)

**Lesson:** Luke 2:16-20

So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. **17** When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; **18** and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. **19** But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. **20** The shepherds

returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

### **Reflection** *(Jan Richardson)*

#### **Carol:** "What Child Is This"

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.**

#### **Carol:** "Go, Tell It on the Mountain"

**Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.  
Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born!**

While shepherds kept their watching  
o'er silent flocks by night,  
behold throughout the heavens  
there shone a holy light. *(refrain)*

The shepherds feared and trembled,  
when lo! above the earth,  
rang out the angel chorus  
that hailed the Savior's birth. *(refrain)*

### **GOING FORTH IN LIGHT**

#### **Litany of Blessed Light** *(Jan Richardson – adapted as a litany)*

Reader 1: I cannot tell you how the light comes. What I know is that it is more ancient than imagining.

Reader 2: That it travels across an astounding expanse to reach us.

Reader 1: That it loves searching out what is hidden, what is lost, what is forgotten or in peril or in pain.

Reader 2: That it has a fondness for the body, for finding its way toward flesh, for tracing the edges of form, for shining forth through the eye, the hand, the heart.

Reader 1: I cannot tell you how the light comes, but that it does. That it will.

Reader 2: That it works its way into the deepest dark that enfolds you, though it may seem long ages in coming or arrive in a shape you did not foresee.

**ALL: And so may we this night turn ourselves toward it.**

Reader 1: May we lift our faces to let it find us.

Reader 2: May we bend our bodies to follow the arc it makes.

**ALL: May we open, and open more and open still, to the blessed light that comes.**

## Lighting the Candles

**Carol:** "Silent Night, Holy Night"

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.

**Departing Prayer** *(Jan Richardson)*

**Departing Carol:** "Joy to the World"

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.

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!  
Let all their songs employ;  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

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.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**