



Welcome to Vanderbilt! We rejoice that you are here to worship God with us.

Children are important members of our faith community and are welcome in worship. Please ask an usher if assistance is needed. As a courtesy to others, please turn off cell phones during the service. The asterisk (*) in the bulletin indicates that the congregation is asked to stand as able. We use responsive or unison readings and prayers at different times. The leader will read the words in *italics*, the congregation reads words in **bold print**.



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The church is a member of the Peace River Presbytery, the Synod of South Atlantic, and the Presbyterian Church (USA). OneLicense.net 3 A-719387



December 24, 2023

Christmas Eve — 7pm

Worship Participants

The Rev. Robert J. Marrow, *Pastor*
Bob & Dianne Townsend, *Christ Candle Liturgists*
Susie Hilton, *Liturgist*
James Cochran, *Director of Music*, playing the
Richard & Patricia Fors Organ given to the glory
of God and in honor of James Cochran, Organist.

The Chancel Choir
Julie Carver, *Pianist*
Greeters: Lynn & Shar Rosser
Ushers: Pat Rose (Head Usher), Carol Jorgensen,
Steve Blad, Judy Davis, Dick Hilton, Sonja Cookson
Audio/Visual Technician: Victoria Bonavita

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Prelude: Christmas Duets for Organ and Piano

Gordon Black, *Piano*

Welcome

Lighting of the Candles

Bob and Dianne Townsend

To a people longing for hope and yearning for deliverance, the prophet Isaiah declared, 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...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.

(Isaiah 9:2, 6)

Tonight, we come seeking hope, peace, joy, and love, and we find these things in a child. God made flesh as a baby in a manger. A baby who is both the beginning and the end of our salvation, who dwells with us even now, our Emmanuel, God with us.

Congregation: We live as people in the in-between who celebrate the arrival of the Light that shines in lost and broken places as we wait for the day when we will live in the fullness of God's kingdom.

We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, our just peace, our fierce joy, the love that transforms us, and Jesus Christ, our wondrous Light. May the Light burning in our hearts guide us, comfort us, protect us, and tend us in all seasons and circumstances, reminding us that day and night, in the light and in the darkness, God is with us. Our salvation has come!

Amen.

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| <p>1. 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!
<i>Refrain:</i> O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ, the Lord!</p> | <p>2. Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing! <i>Refrain</i></p> <p>3. Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation!
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all Glory in the highest! <i>Refrain</i></p> |
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Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession & Silent Personal Confession

God of love Incarnate, we confess that, with the shepherds, we are terrified of your glory; for in glory's light we see plainly all that is wrong in the world; how oppression still enslaves; how garments of war are still stained with blood; how those seeking refuge still find no place of safety. We also see what is wrong in us: how passionately we pursue the things of this world, but forget to ponder the mystery of faith; how we do not practice the peace you intend in our relationships, our community, or even in the church. Forgive us, we pray, and help us not to be afraid. Like the shepherds, we want to follow and find you. In the savior's name we pray. *(silence)* Amen.

Affirmation of Forgiveness

Friends, believe the good news of the gospel.
In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

Prayer of Illumination

The First Reading

Isaiah 9:2-7

² 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. ³ You have multiplied exultation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. ⁴ 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. ⁵ For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. 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 Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Great will be his authority, 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.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Gospel Reading

Luke 2:1-14

¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar 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 in the guest room. ⁸ Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord 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 Messiah, the Lord. 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 among those whom he favors!"
The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Message: "Glory to God"

The Rev. Robert J. Marrow

Choir Carol: "In the Bleak Midwinter"

arr. Robert Lau (b. 1943)

The Chancel Choir

*** A Christmas Creed**

I believe in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the gospel begun in Bethlehem. I believe in the one whose spirit glorified a little town; and whose spirit still brings music to persons all over the world, in towns both large and small. I believe in the one for whom the crowded inn could find no room, and I confess that my heart still sometimes wants to exclude Christ from my life today. I believe in the one who the rulers of the earth ignored and the proud could never understand; whose life was among common people, whose welcome came from persons of hungry hearts. I believe in the one who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible. I believe in the one whose cradle was a mother's arms, whose modest home in Nazareth had love for its only wealth, who looked at persons and made them see what God's love saw in them, who by love brought sinners back to purity, and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God. I confess my everlasting need of God: the need of forgiveness for our selfishness and greed, the need of new life for empty souls, the need of love for hearts grown cold. I believe in God who gives us the best of himself. I believe in Jesus, the son of the living God, born in Bethlehem that night, for me and for the world. Amen.

The Christmas Offering

Offertory Music: "Mary Did You Know?"

David Curtiss, *Baritone*

Mark Lowry (b. 1958)

Buddy Green (b. 1953)

The Lighting of the Candles (*Seated*)

HOT WAX CAUTION: Do not tip the flaming candle. Tip the unlighted candle into the flame.

Congregational Carol #60: "Silent Night" (*Seated*)

STILLE NACHT

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| <p>1. 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.</p> <p>2. 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!"</p> | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> |
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The Christmas Prayer

(Please extinguish your candles after the Prayer.)

*Commission and Blessing

The love of God, the light of Christ, and the joy of the Holy Spirit

Abide with you this holy night and forever.

Alleluia!

Amen!

* Christmas Carol #40: "Joy to the World"

ANTIOCH

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| <p>1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come:
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing, (3 times)</p> <p>2. Joy to the world, the Savior reigns:
Let us our songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, (3 times)</p> | <p>3. 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, (3 times)</p> <p>4. He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love, (3 times)</p> |
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Postlude: "Carol"

Wilbur Held (1914-2015)