

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service
December 24, 2020 at 7 PM

PRE-WORSHIP MUSIC

*Drummer Boy Christmas Medley*¹ (2020)
*Away in a Manger*² (2016)
*Carol of the Bells*³ (2020)
*Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*⁴ (2018)

Ty Moyer, Drum
Children's Chime Choir
Drew Moyer, Piano
HARMONY

WESTMINSTER CHIMES

PRELUDE

*Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*⁵ (Bach)

Organ

LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH CALL TO WORSHIP (John 1:1-9)

Pastor: Hear ye! Hear ye! Hear the Good News!
In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God. (*Light candle*)

Pastor: The Word was with God in the beginning.
Everything came into being through the Word,
and without the Word
nothing came into being. (*Light candle*)

Pastor: What came into being
through the Word was life,
and the life was the light for all people.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness cannot overcome it. (*Light candle*)

Pastor: A man named John was sent from God. He came as a witness to testify concerning the
light, so that through him everyone would believe in the light. He himself was not the
light, but his mission was to testify concerning the light. (*Light candle*)

*All people: The true light,
that shines on all people,
was coming into the world.
The light shines in the darkness,
And the darkness cannot overcome it!*

¹ Ty Moyer shares his drumming passion in this Drummer's Boy Christmas Medley selection. We are encouraged to step outside our comfort zone and like the traditional "Little Drummer Boy" Christmas carols says, to lay our gifts before the King.

² In 2016, the Children's Bell Choir, lovingly played "Away in a Manger" at our Annual Christmas at Starview Concert. While the date of this carol goes back to at least 1887, the name of the author is contested. Although it was long claimed to be the work of the German theologian and reformer, Martin Luther, it is now thought to be wholly American in origin.

³ Drew Moyer beautifully shares his piano interpretation of the classic Ukranian Christmas Carol based on the Ukranian folk chant "Shchedryk" called "Carol of the Bells."

⁴ This carol, "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" is of German origin and makes a symbolic reference to Mary, Jesus' Mother, as being a rose. It also references Jesus in the prophecies of Isaiah. It foretells the incarnation of Christ, blooming from the "stump of Jesse" and springing from the "lineage of David". This presentation by Harmony, Starview's All Men's Choir, was tenderly offered on a Sunday morning in Advent, 2018.

⁵ Although J.S. Bach is often credited as the composer of the melody to "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," Johanna Schop first published it in 1643. In 1661, Martin Janus wrote new words for Schop's tune and then Bach took two of the song's stanzas, harmonized and synchronized them for the very first Advent Cantata titled, "Heart and Mouth and Deed and Life".

INVITATION TO CONFESSION (John 1:10-11)

Pastor: The light was in the world,
and the world came into being through the light,
but the world did not recognize the light.

*Liturgist: The light came to his own people,
and his own people did not welcome him.*

**All people: We confess – we are like those people:
for we do not always recognize nor welcome The Light.**

SPECIAL MUSIC

*I Wonder as I Wander*⁶

Gary Knisely, Tenor Solo

CONFESSION (Based on 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Colossians 3:12 and Galatians 5:22-23)

All people: To welcome Jesus, the Light of the World, means living by the Spirit. To welcome The Light, means growing from spiritual infancy into mature people of faith who reflect the Light of Jesus in their lives; living as those clothed in Christ; showing forth His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, humility, compassion, gentleness, and self-control in their words and actions. As children of the Light, why then do we still act like mere worldly human beings? Forgive us. Restore us. Renew us. Remake us. Birth in us again, the Light, the Spirit of Christ this night. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE (Based on John 1:12-16)

Pastor: Hear the Good News: Those who welcomed the Light of the World, those who believed in his name, he authorized to become God's children born not from blood nor from human desire but born from God.

**Congregation: The Word became flesh and made his home among us.
We have seen his glory,
full of grace and truth.
We are God's children!**

Pastor: John testified about him, crying out,
“This is the one of whom I said,
‘He who comes after me is greater than me because he existed before me.’”

**Congregation: From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace!
The true light,
that shines on all people,
was coming into the world.
The light shines in the darkness,
And the darkness cannot overcome it! (Light the Christ Candle)**

⁶ John Jacob Niles, a folklorist wrote this Christmas carol based on a song fragment he heard while traveling in the southern Appalachian Mountains. The main theme was born from a song by the young girl, Annie Morgan, the daughter of a traveling evangelist in July 1933. The crux of the song is about Jesus, the King, who is our Savior. Although he was all-powerful, as the prophets down through the ages foretold, Jesus chose to die to set us free instead. Gary Knisely passionately sings this hauntingly beautiful Christmas invitation to confess our sin.

HOLY COMMUNION⁸

- Pastor: Tonight, is a night like no other. It is different than most other Christmas Eves experienced in the past. Even so, we gather still, to celebrate the Light of the World; the Light which overcomes any and all darkness! We celebrate how Emmanuel (God-with-us) came to share our common lot in life. Like each one of us gathered tonight, we remember how God came through water and blood, pain and joy, birthed as a newborn infant. We remember and celebrate how his parents, would name God-with-us: Jesus.
- Liturgist: To most of the world, Jesus' arrival went unnoticed; while others, unknowingly turned the Prince of Peace and his weary, much-in-need, family away. They claimed, "we have no room for you here." Emmanuel, God-with-us, ate his first meal, nursing at his mother's breast, as an outcast, an outsider. God-with-us, "the little Lord Jesus" would then "lay down his sweet head" to rest, in an animal's feed trough. It was a night like no other.*
- Pastor: Under normal circumstances, family and friends would have gathered to celebrate the birth of this baby - Jesus. But this was a night like no other. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were separated from their loved ones, because they were doing, what was called for in that moment. They did what needed to be done. Even so, in one spirit, they still celebrated with loved ones across the miles. In looking heavenward, they all gazed upon the same moon and stars, and the same heavenly angels, in a great hallelujah choir, sang a melody of "great tidings of comfort and joy" over them all.
- Liturgist: Different than what he and his parents experienced on the night of his birth, Jesus would grow up to live a life of radical welcome and hospitality. Jesus lifted up the poor, healed the sick, gathered in the homes of strangers, and ate with outcasts and sinners.*
- Pastor: Jesus even used the parable of a great feast, to which all people were invited, in order to talk about what the kingdom of God, the family of God, looks like. He said, "Go to the highways and back alleys and urge people to come in so that my house will be filled." Jesus often invited the most unlikely guests to his mealtimes, confounding his followers. Jesus encouraged a deep love and connection beyond social norms. Surely, around those tables, those were meals like no other.
- Liturgist: Jesus knew that we humans need connection and inclusion. Jesus comforts us, saying, "You are welcome here. There is room for you at my table" and Jesus challenges us to make sure we are doing the same – welcoming and making room for all people in our hearts, in our homes, in our schools, in our churches – even if we can't physically be with each other right now.*

⁷"Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella" is a Christmas Carol about two female farmhands who discover the baby Jesus and his mother in a stable. Excited by their discovery, the carol tells how they run with their torches to the nearby village to share the news. The villagers, with their lighted torches, rush to the stable to see the sleeping newborn. In the Provence region of France, the tradition of children dressing as milkmaids and shepherds carrying their torches and candles while singing this carol, on their way to church, is still observed. Gloria Moyer masterfully plays this stirring selection on her hammered dulcimer.

⁸ The beginning of this Holy Communion Service was entirely written by Pastor Laura Bair. Beginning at the introduction to the "parable of the great feast" Pastor Bair makes large edits and adaptations to a version of a communion service written by Marcia McFee. The service was designed specifically for virtual worship, during the early months of the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic, when social distancing and stay at home mandates were in place.

Pastor: It is difficult not to be near some of the people we love and to celebrate in our traditional ways, this Christmas Eve. Let us take a moment now and say aloud (or you may type in the comment box) the names of the people you wish, were next to you tonight. (Pause)

Liturgist: Jesus is no longer physically on earth, yet every time we gather around a table and we call him to mind, he is present with us in Spirit. And so too, our loved one are with us. May this be a comfort to us.

Pastor: We also want to call to mind, the people we cannot name, whose names we do not know. But we know they need our prayers and God's comfort, as well. We pray...
For those who have lost loved ones.
For those who are sick and for those who care for the ill.
For those who are separated from loved ones.
For those who are feeling alone and isolated.
For those who are so very tired.
For those who are struggling to find friends, food, and comfort.
For those who are afraid.

Liturgist: I invite you to take a deep breath on behalf of all those we do not know and cannot call by name. As we do so, we know that God knows who needs our prayers and the Spirit, the Breath of God, is blowing from within us and outward as a Spirit of Compassion and Presence. (Pause to take a few deep prayer breaths). Amen.

Pastor: Blessings at the table are a part of our Christian heritage. Jesus adapted his Jewish ritual blessing spoken before and after meals and so we are comfortable in adapting ours this night. On a night that would be like no other, on the night before he died for us, Jesus was around a table with friends. He took bread, raised it, gave God thanks, broke it and then asked that we remember him whenever we break bread and raise a cup in thanksgiving.

Liturgist: This is why we call our communion prayers the "Great Thanksgiving." On this Christmas Eve, in this sacramental feast of love and comfort, let us call to mind those things for which we are deeply grateful. I invite you to speak aloud (or type in the comment box) a couple of things that you are grateful for this night. (Pause)

Pastor: And so, I now invite you to raise a plate of "something" on your table and a glass of whatever you are drinking and let us bless it in this way, with each of you, repeating each line after me:

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God...
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace...
We gather in your name....
Invited by Jesus...
Bound together in one Spirit...
In unison with each other...
Feed our bodies and our spirits...
With your comforting presence...
So that we might be your comfort to others...
Bless this food...
And break open our hearts...
Bless this drink...
And pour out your love...
Amen.

Liturgist: On your plate and in your cup: blessed gifts from God, for the beloved people of God.

DISTRIBUTION OF ELEMENTS

Pastor: Take, eat and drink. And, remember with thanksgiving, Jesus the Christ, whose body was broken and whose blood was shed for you and for the world's salvation.

POSTLUDE

*Ava Maria*⁹

Dr. Troy Winemiller, Tenor

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

All people: Most gracious God, on this night like no other, thank you for making room for us at your table. Thank you for inviting us to share this meal as your family. Strengthen us to be a blessing to one another, and a blessing to all the world, in the name of the Christ Child, we pray. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC

*Mary, Did You Know*¹⁰ (2020)

Emily Moyer, Piano

CHRISTMAS POEM

*Hush*¹¹

Sssh.

*Can you hear it?
An expectant silence,
a hushed anticipation,
as if the very galaxy
is holding its breath.
There are some truths
even the stars know,
like darkness,
like loneliness
and how the night
can be a living thing.
And how once, long ago,
the night waited in wonder
along with the darkness
and the loneliness,
for the sound of a baby's cry,
for the miraculous
to come down
to the earth mundane.
Sssh.
Can you hear it?*

⁹ Troy powerfully sings this ancient music piece composed in 1825 by Franz Schubert. Schubert's most popular work of is a prayer to the Virgin Mary. Ava Maria is Latin name of the prayer "Hail Mary."

¹⁰ Emily Moyer skillfully shares her piano version of "Mary, Did you Know" a recent (1984) Christmas Carol written by Mark Lowry. Lowry tried to put into words the "unfathomable." He writes: "I started thinking of the questions I would have for [Mary]... 'What was it like raising God? What did you know? What didn't you know?'" While none of the questions are answered in the carol, we are moved to contemplate the relationship, like Mary, with her divine son.

¹¹ Lucinda Hynett is a published author, whose writing pieces include devotions, articles, sermons, and poems. "Hush" was written in 2012 in *Alive Now* and was posted on the *LiturgyLink* website. < [liturgylink | a community creating for the relentless return of Sunday \(wordpress.com\)](http://liturgylink.com) >

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 2:1-20

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to 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. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

HYMN

*The First Noel*¹³
(Lyrics on Screen)

HOMILY

Rev. Laura C. Bair

¹² Carol Caswell offers a stunningly beautiful rendition of “Do you Hear What I Hear?” This carol was written in 1962 as a plea for peace during the Cuban Missile Crisis, by Noel Regney and Gloria Shayne. The carol is loosely based on the Nativity as recorded in Matthew’s Gospel. Its lyrics are not consistent with Herod’s response of massacring innocent babies following Jesus’ birth. The carol instead alludes to “the king” proclaiming a prayer of peace in announcing the child who “will bring goodness and light.”

¹³ This Christmas Carol is of Cornish origin. Its current form was first published in 1823, with the word “noel” being an early English synonym for “Christmas.”

HYMN

*Silent Night*¹⁴

*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! Darkness flies, all is light;
Shepherds hear the angels sing: Alleluia! Hail the King!
Christ the Savior is born. Christ the Savior is born!*

*Silent night! Holy night! Guiding Star, lend thy light!
See the eastern wise men bring - gifts and homage to our King!
Christ the Savior is born. Christ the Savior is born.*

*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.*

Pastor: People of God, one candle is but a flicker,
but together, we create a bright flame
of Christ's light in the world.
Consider the beauty of our lights shining together.
Jesus is the Light of the world!
Jesus is the hope of all our tomorrows!
The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.
May we be witnesses of the light Christ brings.

Congregation: Amen.

Pastor: As you gently extinguish your candle, carry the light of Jesus' love with you. Amen.

POSTLUDE

¹⁴ This most popular Christmas carol dates back to 1818 and was composed by Franz Gruber. The carol is based on a poem written by a young priest, Father Joseph Mohr, who wrote it in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. Gruber was a schoolmaster and organist in a nearby village. After the church was damaged in a flooding accident, the priest asked Gruber to compose a GUITAR melody to his poem, which would be sung at that evening's Christmas mass.