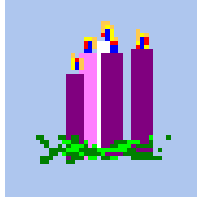


Christmas Eve Service December 24, 2008



LIGHTING THE WAY

Words of Welcome and Lighting of the Advent Candles

- L: *May the Lord of hope, peace, joy, and love be with you.*
P: And also with you.
L: *We gather to celebrate the birth of the One who is the light of the world and to proclaim our eager expectation of His return.*
P: We are here to worship God and His Son Jesus, born this night over 2000 years ago in Bethlehem of Judea.
L: *We **light the candle of hope** to remind us of the promises made by the prophets that God would raise up a savior for His people Israel and for the nations.*
P: Christ is our hope and our salvation. He calls us to share our hope in Him as we eagerly await His 2nd coming and the completion of our salvation.

ALL SING – “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 ever-lasting light,
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God our King, and peace to men on earth.
For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given,
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His 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.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend on us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell.
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord, Emmanuel.
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord, Emmanuel

Phillips Brooks/Lewis Redner, CCLA#2054120

- L: *We **light the candle of peace** to remind us of the Messianic peace that makes us whole by releasing us from the oppression and burdens of this fallen world.*
P: Christ brings peace through the work of the Holy Spirit. He calls us to share His Messianic peace with those lost in the despair of a noisy and confusing world.

ALL SING - “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”

It came upon a midnight clear, that glorious song of old
From angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold
Peace on the earth, goodwill to men from heaven’s all gracious King
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled two thousand years of wrong
And man, at war with man, hears not the love-song which they bring.

O hush the noise, ye men of strife and hear the angels sing!
For lo the days are hastening on by prophet-bards foretold
When with the ever-circling years comes round the age of gold
When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling
And the whole world send back the song, which now the angels sing.

CCL#205412

- L: *We **light the candle of joy** to remind us that God gives joy to every heart that abides in Him.*
P: As Mary rejoiced in the birth of Jesus, so we rejoice in the new birth Christ has given us within. God calls us to share the joy of rebirth into salvation now and our eager expectation of our birth unto salvation fully realized at the marriage of the Lamb.

ALL SING - “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 men 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, and wonders of his love.

Isaac Watts/George Handel CCLI#2054120

- L: We **light the candle of love** to remind us that God so loved the world that He sent Jesus, by whom we were redeemed: the first advent. God's redemptive love continues to transform us by His Spirit until the Day of the Lord, when His redemptive love will be completed, the second advent of Jesus.
- P: Love never fails; it transforms all those who give it and receive it. God calls us to share His love with each other.

Reading of the Birth Narrative

Luke 2:1-19 ^{NLT} **Luke 2:1** At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ² (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ All returned to their own towns to register for this census. ⁴ And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵ He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was obviously pregnant by this time. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷ She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the village inn. ⁸ That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. ⁹ Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terribly frightened, ¹⁰ but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! ¹¹ The Savior-- yes, the Messiah, the Lord-- has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David! ¹² And this is how you will recognize him: You will find a baby lying in a manger, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth!" ¹³ Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others-- the armies of heaven-- praising God: ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to all whom God favors. " ¹⁵ When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Come on, let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the

Lord has told us about." ¹⁶ They ran to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. ¹⁷ Then the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. ¹⁸ All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, ¹⁹ but Mary quietly treasured these things in her heart and thought about them often.

Lighting of the Christ Candle

- L: We light the Christ candle to remind us that the light came into this world one night long ago, that this light dwells in the hearts that receive Him today, and that this light will one day come to abide unhindered forever.
- P: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them a light has shined.
- L: You, O Lord, have increased Your kingdom by shining Your light into the hearts of Your people. You have increased our joy and have promised an unending fullness of joy to come.
- P: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder.
- L: His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.
- P: He is also called Emmanuel, for in Him God is with us.

ALL SING - "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 Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh
To us the path of knowledge show, and cause us in her ways to go.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Desire of Nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, thou Dayspring come and cheer our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

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Unison Prayer of Approach

P: Almighty God, You have made this night holy by the gift of Your Son, born of the Holy Spirit and of Mary. Through Him come the hope, the peace, the joy, and the love symbolized by these candles of Advent. Let His light shine within our hearts tonight even more brightly than it shines from the candles in this room. Help us to hear Your word, to walk in Your Spirit, and to celebrate Your everlasting love through Him as we await the day of His second Advent. Amen.

ALL SING - "O Holy Night"

O Holy Night, the stars are brightly shining;
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'til He appeared and the soul felt His worth.
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees, oh hear the angels' voices!
O night divine, O night, when Christ was born
O night divine, O night, O night divine!
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Closing Prayer