

# First Christmas Eve Service

Posted on [December 15, 2020](#)

## *Featuring the 2020 Virtual Christmas Pageant*

### Lighting of the Christmas Candle

*The priest associate prays the Christmas Collect as the candle is lit. You are invited to light a candle in the center of your Advent Wreath (or any candle) as you pray with us.*

The Lord be with you,  
**And also with you.**  
Let us pray.

O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light; Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen.**

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### Welcome and Opening Sentences

*The rector welcomes the congregation and introduces the pageant.*

Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy, which will come to all the people; for unto you is born this night in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. *Luke 2:10, 1*

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### The Setting

This night is like no other night. It is a time to dream and sing our way to Bethlehem. The little town we seek sits in the hill country some ten miles south of Jerusalem. For thousands of years the houses have gathered there on the hilltop like a family breaking bread. "Bethlehem" means "House of Bread."

In the center of the village is a small inn. On this night it is overflowing with people seeking sleep and a place to eat. Behind the inn is a dark stable. A gray donkey chews his barley and broken straw while a weary cow leans and rests after the day's plowing in the valley. A sheep nearby is nearly asleep. All is still and quiet in the little town.

## Carol: O Little Town of Bethlehem

*Hymnal 1982 # 79 verses 1 and 2*

*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.*

## Mary and Joseph Arrive in Bethlehem

As night gathers, the last two travelers come slowly up the road. Look, there is a young woman about to be a mother. She is walking with her husband. They are Mary and Joseph from Nazareth! They have walked for six days to come to this city where King David was born, so long ago.

They have come, like so many others, because the Roman emperor wants to count each one, so he can take their money as a tax.

But it is late, and Mary is so weary. Where will they sleep? There is no room in the inn. They decide to sleep with the animals.

*For Christ is born of Mary;  
and gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep t  
heir watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth!  
and praises sing to God the King,  
and peace to men on earth.*

## Jesus is Born

Stars brighten slowly in the sky. All creation holds its breath. Suddenly, from the stable, comes the cry of a newborn child! Mary gently wraps the baby in a blanket and lays him in the feed box that his father has filled with straw.

## Carol: Away in a Manger

Lift Every Voice and Sing Hymnal # 27 verses 1&2

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed  
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.  
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.  
The cattle are lowing the Baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes,  
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,  
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.  
Be near me Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay,  
Close by me forever, and love my, I pray  
Bless all the dear children, in thy tender care  
And fit us for heaven to live with thee there.*

## Jesus is Born

In the hills outside Bethlehem, shepherds watch their shadowy sheep. All at once, the dark is lost in light, and in the midst of the light is something even brighter: the faces of angels. The fearful shepherds then hear music in the sky, and a voice says clearly:

*Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by all people.  
Today in the City of David a Savior is born! He is Christ, the Lord.*

The shepherds run with joy across the fields to Bethlehem to the barn behind the inn. There they find the Holy Family and creep forward, overwhelmed with mystery, to find Nativity itself in the center of all that love.

Then more angels appear, a whole heavenly host of them, praising God and singing:

## Carol: Chatter with the Angels

*Traditional Spiritual arranged by Eliana Haig*

*Chatter with the angels  
soon in the morning.  
Chatter with the angels in that land.  
Chatter with the angels  
soon in the morning.  
Chatter with the angels, join that band.  
I want to join that band  
and chatter with the angels all day long!  
I want to join that band  
and chatter with the angels all day long!*

*Oh Lord, do you hear that chitter chatter?  
Oh Lord, do you hear that chat?  
All day long?*

## **A Christmas Hope**

So now we all come, to find God-with-us. We come, as people have come all through the ages, to bring our own gifts to this Child, God's gift to us.

We tell this tale of wonder and majesty every year, as it has been told for thousands of years. The story of angels and shepherds, stables and mangers, Mary and Joseph and the Christ Child.

And though the message does not change, we hope that the message continues to change our hearts, to change our minds, to bring needed change to our world. This Christmas, may God's promised peace be born in our world again.

Joy to you and your family on this Christmastide!

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

*Angels we have heard on high,  
singing sweetly through the night,  
and the mountains in reply  
echoing their brave delight.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.*

*Come to Bethlehem and see  
him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee  
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo*

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## **Homily: The Rev. Mike Angell**

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## **The Prayers**

*You may add your prayer requests in the comments at any time. Know people will pray for you. The response to the prayer is the ancient Advent Hymn "O Come O Come Emmanuel"*

In peace, we pray to you, Lord God.

At a time when the faithful cannot come gather safely in person in ways we remember and cherish, we pray for the church throughout the world. Help us to remember all of those bishops, priests, and deacons and baptized ministers who have responded to this health crisis with courage and faith. Help us to know that we can come to adore you in a parking lot, through a screen at home, in a shelter, a hospital ward, or wherever Christmas finds us in this scattered world.

In a world facing a health pandemic, and coming to terms with the ongoing pandemics of racism and discrimination give us persistence and humility. Let us remind our neighbors and our elected officials, that the Son of God had no place to lay his head but a lowly manger. God chose the humble, the poor, and the hungry. Give us courage to stand with those whose voices often go unheard. In the midst of the coronavirus, we remember all those who are suffering with the disease, and all of the nurses, doctors, and first responders caring for them. We remember family members who are unable to visit. *You are invited to add your own prayers, even to write your prayer request in the comments as you watch.*

Finally this Christmas, let us remember all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that whole multitude which no one can number who ran the course of faith before us. As we remember them, help us to cast our cares, our hopes, and our fears with You, the God who chose to dwell with us.

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*Celebrant*

O Lord our God, accept the fervent prayers of your people; in the multitude of your mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious, O lover of souls, and to you we give glory, Holy Trinity, One God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## **The Peace**

The peace of Christ be always with you.  
**And also with you.**

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## **Announcements**

*The rector shares a few brief announcements.*

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# Carol: Silent Night

1982 Hymnal #111

Si - lent night, ho - ly night, all is calm,  
Si - lent night, ho - ly night, shep - herds quake  
Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Son of God,

all is bright round yon vir - gin mo - ther and child.  
at the sight, glo - ries stream from hea - ven a - far,  
love's pure light ra - diant beams from thy ho - ly face,

Ho - ly in - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in hea - ven - ly  
heaven - ly hosts— sing al - le - lu - ia; Christ, the Sa - vior, is  
with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at thy

peace. Sleep in hea - ven - ly peace.  
born! Christ, the Sa - vior, is born!  
birth. Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth.

Words: Joseph Mohr (1792-1848); tr. John Freeman Young (1820-1885)  
Music: *Stille Nacht*, melody Franz Xaver Gruber (1787-1863); harm. Carl H. Reinecke (1824-1910)

# The Christmas Blessing

*The Rector pronounces the Christmas Blessing*

May God, who sent angels to proclaim the glad news of the Savior's birth, fill you with joy and make you heralds of the Gospel. And the blessing of God the holy and undivided Trinity be upon you and remain with you for ever. **Amen**

## Dismissal

*The Deacon dismisses the congregation*

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

## Postlude

**Baba Yetu** composed by Christopher Tin

### **Swahili**

*Baba yetu, yetu uliye  
Mbinguni yetu, yetu amina!  
Baba yetu yetu uliye  
M Jina lako e litukuzwe.  
Utupe leo chakula chetu  
Tunachohitaji, utusamehe  
Makosa yetu, hey!  
Kama nasi tunavyowasamehe  
Waliotukosea usitutie  
Katika majaribu, lakini  
Utuokoe, na yule, muovu e milele!  
Ufalme wako ufike utakalo  
Lifanyike duniani kama mbinguni.  
(Amina)*

### **English**

Our Father, who art  
in Heaven. Amen!  
Our Father,  
Hallowed be thy name.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
Forgive us of our trespasses,  
As we forgive others  
Who trespass against us  
Lead us not into temptation, but  
deliver us from the evil one forever.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done  
On Earth as it is in Heaven.  
(Amen)

**Service Leaders**

Preacher: The Rev. Mike Angell  
Presider: The Rev. Marc Smith  
Deacon: The Rev. Chester Hines  
Seminarian: Emilee Walker-Cornetta  
Director of Music: Mary Chapman

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