

**Service of Lessons and Carols**  
December 24, 2023  
Evening Service

**Prelude and Chimes**

**In the Beginning was the Word**

**Reading:** John 1:1-14

Rev. Clara Young

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

**Leader:** Rejoice, people of God! The light has come into the world.  
*(A member of a family lights the four Advent candles.)*

O God, now we light the candle of your nativity!  
*(A member of the family lights the center white Christ candle.)*

**People:** **With the company of heaven and with sounds of great joy, you come to us. This is the time of light and resplendent joy.**

**Leader:** The prophet Isaiah proclaimed a time when those who walked in the shadows would see a great light. A light would shine, and a child would be born to us. The evangelist Luke painted the nativity sky and repeated the heavenly song of the angels, "Glory, peace on earth and goodwill!" John declared that this great light is Christ, the Word made flesh. This great light lives among us. By it we behold God's glory—full of grace and truth. At Christ's nativity, we now rejoice.

**People:** **God, our Life and Light, thank you for coming this night to us. Thank you for touching all heaven and earth with your splendor. In every corner of the world, shine this night with your peace. In every corner of our hearts, shine with your grace. Amen.**

**\*Hymn #1:** "O Come, All Ye Faithful" (booklet of Traditional Christmas Carols)

**The Prophets Foretold It**

**Reading:** Micah 5:2

Jim Miers

**Reading:** Isaiah 9:6-7

Tina Alston

**\*Hymn #3:** "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (booklet of Traditional Christmas Carols)

### **\*Invocation**

**Emmanuel, we listen to the story of the prophets and angels, young woman and carpenter, shepherd and magi, and we too come to Bethlehem for a blessing. We are filled with love because you have taken upon yourself our humanity; we are filled with hope because you have offered us your life and light; we are filled with faith because all that is humble and vulnerable to us and to creation becomes holy this night. Our salvation appears to sweet sacred surprise and we too respond, "Glory to God and, on earth, peace." Amen.**

**Anthem:** The Rose of Bethlehem, by Douglas E. Wagner

### **The Birth of Jesus**

**Reading:** Luke 2:1-7

Sandy Hamlin

**\*Hymn #124:** "Away In the Manger"

### **Time With Young Disciples**

#### **\*Unison Prayer**

**God who labors to bring forth abundant life among us, we thank you for the birth we celebrate tonight. A newborn bundle of human life can cause us to gaze for hours, amazed. Refresh our amazement that you sent Jesus from your very self, to be born a human baby, and to live among us, showing us the way to new life. In response to your great labor of love, we open ourselves to you, that you may create new life among us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

### **Angels Appear to the Shepherds**

**Reading:** Luke 2:9-20

Karen Jones

**\*Hymn #125:** "Angels We Have Heard On High"

### **Invitation to the Offering**

*(Opportunities to give for the ministries of this church are available through an offering plate during service, by mailing your gift to the church office, or by signing up for electronic giving through our website.)*

**\*Doxology**

Praise God whose dawn transfigures night,  
Whose Daystar shines for us on high,  
Whose Spirit brings into our sight  
The hope which to our world draws nigh. Amen.

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

Thank you, God of love, for the promise of this season. We are grateful for the generosity aroused in us by Christ's coming into the world. May these gifts represent a new spirit of joyous sharing among us, for the sake of all your children everywhere. Amen.

**The Magi**

**Reading:** Matthew 2:1-11

Jan Derry

**Anthem:** Sing Joy to the World! by Dan R. Edwards

**A Reflection,** by Beth Norden

**A poem for Christmas** (please see the next page for the full text) Rev. Clara Young

**Candle lighting service with "Silent Night"**

**Silent night! Holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;  
Glories stream from heaven afar, Heav'nly 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.**

**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.**

**\*Hymn #4:** "Joy to the World" (booklet of Traditional Christmas Carols)

**\*Commissioning and Blessing**

**\*Postlude**

## Portrait by a Young Female Artist

Mary, God-chosen artist  
Creating from the fabric of your life  
The One above all others.  
Your DNA paints the hues of  
Middle Eastern grounding,  
Rich shading from Mediterranean sun.  
Your bloodline of ancestral commitment  
Flows through the heartbeat of  
The One Who so loved the world.

Mary, God-chosen artist  
You imprinted yourself  
In those tiny hands that now reach out to you.  
They will become healing hands on our brokenness.  
Within your womb the white spectrum of light  
Burst into rainbow colors, symbols of  
God's faithfulness to all God's people.

Mary, God-chosen artist  
You will touch your holy palette of mothering  
With strong bold strokes of compassionate love,  
God-speaking wisdom, justice-colored words.  
You will form, as a sculptor, Bethlehem's baby  
Into Nazareth's man ready to be anointed  
In the Spirit-filled waters of Baptism.

Mary, God-chosen artist  
You gifted the world with He who would show us  
What God incarnate looks like,  
Birthed in humanity infused with Holy Presence.  
Your resting time has now come.  
In the silent night of Bethlehem,  
The birthing of a new heaven and a new earth has begun.  
Alleluia!

Clara Young  
Christmas 2023