



Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship

Service of the Word and Sacrament

December 24, 2023

5:00 p.m.

Please SILENCE ALL Personal Electronic Devices Before Worship.

We Gather as God’s People

Welcome to our worship service. Take a moment to quiet yourself as we prepare ourselves for worship.

The PreludeMedley of Christmas Carols

The Christmas Welcome

The Silence

The Call to Worship [Responsive] (*Please stand*)..... Rev. Scott Marrese-Wheeler

One: The peace of God be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

One: When we wait in the night in the hush that only stars can hold as they bend towards the coming of the light; when we wait in the night laboring with anticipation of what midnight shall bring; when we wait in the night listening to the cadence of minutes beat in rhythm with the birth of hope;

Many: **may we hold our collective breaths with the angelic host as they clutch their restless alleluias,**

One: for God is on the way:

Many: **the mother is laboring, the father pacing, the stable readying, the word is waiting, the light is sliding and the promise is breaking through.**

One: When we wait in the longing for midnight in expectation of Good News may we choose to wait together and find we have moved to the edge of our seats.

Many: **for in such anticipation it is the only place for the Word to be born among us.**

***The Carol** *PH* # 41 (*Please stand*)“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

**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!**

Refrain:

**O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!**

**Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning, Jesus, to Thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing!**

Refrain

**Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation! Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all Glory in the highest!**

Refrain

The Scripture

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

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. His authority shall grow continually, 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 Lighting of the Christ Candle

Reader 1: Our time to wait is over. Christmas is here. Our days of preparation are completed. What has not been done will now have to be left undone. We have witnessed to this very hour, this very night, and we hope that the world has heard the good news which we have spoken. We have decided to "Let it be," to do things God's way rather than our own, and to follow the vulnerable baby born in a manger.

Reader 2: Our circle of Advent candles is lit; now tonight we light the center candle, reminding us that Christ is the Light of the world, the center of our lives, the shining beacon of hope and peace for all the world. Christ is born anew!
Hallelujah!

The Christmas Prayer [Responsive]

One: Let us pray... On this Holy Night, we gather with others around the world to tell the story of Your Love Incarnate come alive in a weary world. We pray that same Love would come alive anew in a world still weary and longing for your Love and Peace.

Many: Come alive, O Christ,

One: in the weary parts of our souls, in the war-torn countries fraught with fear, in the ailing bodies whose prognoses are grim, so that hope bursts out through our despair.

Many: Come alive, O Christ,

One: in the storms that overwhelm our souls with anxiety, in the homes and neighborhoods hampered with violence, in the eyes of those who blindly hate their neighbor, so that peace calms the reckless rage that bloodies our lands.

Many: Come alive, O Christ,

One: in the lonely world of selfishness, in the scarred, minds of those who think life has no meaning, in the grief of loved ones lost so that joy rekindles generosity, purpose, and gratitude.

Many: Come alive, O Christ,

One: in the broken places where reconciliation seems unattainable, in the communities devoid of connection and kinship, in the spaces where neglect, apathy, and abuse harm far too many so that love, love, love overwhelms all hearts, fills every gap, and changes the world for good.

Many: Come alive, O Christ,

One: so that your light may dwell in us and shine forever and ever.

ALL: Amen

***The Carol PH # 28 (Please stand).....** “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”

Good Christian friends, rejoice With heart, and soul, and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before Him bow, And He is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!

Good Christian friends, rejoice With heart, and soul, and voice;
Now ye hear of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!
He hath opened heaven’s door, And we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!

Good Christian friends, rejoice With heart, and soul, and voice;
Now ye need not fear the grave: Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all To gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

The Story of Christ’s Birth “Joseph’s Story” – Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

The Christmas Joy Offering and Prayer of Dedication

The Musical Reflection “Emmanuel”

The Story of Christ’s Birth “Mary’s Story” – Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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 for them in the inn.

The Carol PH # 25 “Away in a Manger”

Away in a manger, no crib for His 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 poor Baby wakes, But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky, And stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care, And fit us for heaven to live with Thee there.

The Story of Christ's Birth "The Angel's Visit" – Luke 2:8-14

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

The Carol *PH* # 22 "Angels, from the Realms of Glory"

Angels, from the realms of glory, Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye, who sang creation's story Now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship, come and worship, Worship Christ, the newborn King!

Shepherds, in the fields abiding, Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing, Yonder shines the infant light:
Come and worship, come and worship, Worship Christ, the newborn King!

Sages, leave your contemplations, Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great desire of nations; Ye have seen His natal star:
Come and worship, come and worship, Worship Christ, the newborn King!

All creation, join in praising God the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising To the eternal Three in One.
Come and worship, come and worship, Worship Christ, the newborn King!

The Story of Christ's Birth "The Shepherds' Visit" – Luke 2:15-20

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The Christmas Reflection Rev. Scott Marrese-Wheeler

Musical Reflection "O Holy Night"

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

The Invitation to Communion

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

One: The Lord be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Open your hearts to the One born in the little town of Bethlehem.

Many: May Emmanuel come to abide in our hearts.

One: Join all believers in singing of our joy this night.

Many: May our voices blend with those of the angels and shepherds.

One: You crept into chaos so long ago, Star-shaper, so creation might be born: sheep gathering on hillsides, stars glittering in the night skies. Silently, you gathered up the dust, shaping us in your image as the Spirit breathed life into us. All the gifts of your heart were for us, but we slammed the door of our hearts,

Many: saying there was no room for you in our lives.

One: Prophets came time and again, scattering your clues throughout the Story,

Many: but we were too busy enjoying the sleights of hand done by sin and death.

One: When you saw we could not understand the Mystery on our own, you sent Jesus, to reveal everything to us. As we gather together, we join with the voices around us,

Many: we sing praises to you this Christmas Eve night:

One: We will not be afraid, for great joy is ours this night; we will look for the signs of your presence, grace swaddled in hope, love wrapped around broken hearts.

Many: Glory to you, God in the highest heavens! May peace fill the lives of all your people!

One: Leaving your side, God of holiness, your Child came to walk with us through the cold streets of our lives. Born in poverty's shadows, he is the light which illumines your heart for us. Unwrapped from glory's embrace, he gathers us from all the corners of our confused choices to make us one with you. Placed in a rude feeding trough layered with our fears and doubts, he breathes in your hopes and lives your will, until he is placed in death's cold embrace, waiting in the silence, where he breathes in resurrection's breath, and brings forth life for all who follow. On this night, when we sing of the baby in the manger, as the shadow of the cross is cast by the stars, we proclaim that mystery called incarnation:

Many: Christ is our light, and we will join the angels in singing the good news;

One: Christ is our life, and we will join the disciples in telling the Story;

Many: Christ is our promise, and we wait for the joy of his return.

One: Here in the silence and the singing, with children, carols, and candlelight, we gather around the Table of joy, as you pour out your Spirit upon the most precious gifts of bread and cup. As we feast upon the bread, we remember a young pregnant girl, and would serve those who are expecting, those who cannot have a child, those who have lost children. As we drink from the cup, we think of a worried father, and would be with those who assemble toys this night, as well as those who will work this night to pay for food and medicine for their families. As we are surrounded by family and friends, we would care for those whose closest companion is loneliness, those separated from loved ones, those who hear no music, joy, or hope in their lives. And when all time and history becomes silence, we will be gathered with our siblings, from Bethlehem and Gaza, from Israel and the West Bank, from Ukraine and Russia from every corner and moment of every universe, to join the angel choirs in forever singing your praises

Many: as we dance together to the Table of wonder and grace, God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread and Sharing of the Cup

(Communion will be served by intinction. Please come forward by the center aisle. You will receive a piece of bread, please dip it into the Cup, and then partake as you return to your seat.)

The Carols During Communion

PH # 38 (verse 1) “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”

It came upon the midnight clear, That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth, To touch their harps of gold:
“Peace on the earth, good will to all, From heaven’s all-gracious King”:
The world in solemn stillness lay, To hear the angels sing.

PH # 53 (verse 1) “What Child Is This”

What Child is this, who, laid to rest, On Mary’s lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary!

PH # 44 (verse 1) “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 everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight.

The Prayer after Communion [Responsive]

One: Let us pray together.

Many: Great God, as you came at night when all was still, so enter our lives this night.
Illumine our paths with the light of Christ’s presence, that we may clearly see the way before us, the truth to speak, and the life to live for him, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Celebration of God’s Light

The Scripture **John 1:1-5**

In the beginning there was the Word; the Word was in God’s presence, and the Word was God. The Word was present to God from the beginning. Through the Word all things came into being, and apart from the Word nothing came into being that has come into being. In the Word was life, and that life was humanity’s light— a Light that shines in the darkness, a Light that the darkness has never overtaken.

***The Carol** PH # 60 (*Please stand*) “Silent Night”

(During the singing of “Silent Night” the candles will be lit closest to the center aisle. Once your candle has been lit, please do not tip it. Instead, allow the person next to you to tip their unlit candle, and receive the light from you.)

**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! Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly 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! 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.

(Please extinguish your light following the Christmas Blessing. As we leave the sanctuary, the extinguished candles may be placed in the baskets or boxes.)

The Closing Response and Christmas Blessing

One: Let us go to be the gift another needs,

Many: sharing God’s blessings of love and grace, running to tell the Story we heard from the shepherds.

One: Let us go to be the comfort which can swaddle others,

Many: sharing Jesus’ compassion with the poor and needy, welcoming the holiness offered by the most vulnerable we meet.

One: Let us go to kindle the lives around us,

Many: sharing the Spirit’s peace with all the broken, learning the language of hope from the children in our midst.

One: Let go out as Star-bearers, sharing the Light of Christ, bring peace, love, joy and hope to all, this night and every day. Amen.

The Carol *PH* # 40 “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 us our songs employ; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

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, Far as the curse is found, Far as, far as the curse is found.

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, wonders of His love.

Postlude “Carol of the Bells” arr. Lani Smith



The liturgy this evening is from: The Christmas Prayer ~ Presbyterian Outlook - [JEREMY WILHELM](#); The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving ~ Lectionary Liturgies by Thom Shuman; The Closing Response and Christmas Blessing ~ Lectionary Liturgies – Thom Shuman.

Oakland Cambridge Presbyterian Church is committed to using language in such a way that all members of the community of faith may recognize themselves to be included, addressed, and equally cherished before God. Seeking to bear witness to the whole world, the church struggles to use language which is faithful to the biblical truth and which neither purposefully nor inadvertently excludes people because of gender, color, or other circumstance in life. (Book of Order, W-1.2006)

- Thank you to Marian Korth, our musician today.
- WELCOME to all who are visiting with us tonight! MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!
- Thank you to our office administrator, Ruth Poole, for coordinating the printing of this bulletin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS —

- The church office will be closed on Monday, December 25.
- Sunday, December 31 – 10:00 a.m. Worship

Church Schedule

Worship Service: 10:00 a.m. Sunday

Communion: First Sunday of each month

Pastoral Office Hours: Generally 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Wednesday or by appointment

Business Office Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Monday – Thursday

(Church hours are approved by Session and posted on church entry doors.)

Telephone/Fax: 608-423-3001

Email: Office@OCPChurch.com or Pastor@OCPChurch.com

Web: www.OCPChurch.com

Mailing Address: 313 E. Main St., Cambridge, WI 53523-9629



Visit us on Facebook: Oakland-Cambridge Presbyterian Church

CHURCH STAFF

Music—

Accompanists: Karen Brunk, Marian Korth, Angie Williams

Business Manager: Ruth Poole

Pastor: Pastor Scott Marrese-Wheeler: (608) 417-0231 cell;

Pastor@OCPChurch.com

Facebook: Scott Marrese-Wheeler

Follow Rev. Scott on Twitter: @2revsScott

