

Worship December 13, 2020

WELCOME

I welcome you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Christmas carols provide a rich form for all people to praise God. More than at any other time of the year, we love to sing at Christmas. Singing the hymns and carols of Christmas puts us in touch with our past, brightens our lives, and reminds us of God's promises for the future.

A rich heritage of Christmas carols has been passed on to us. Through them we remember who we are and whose we are. As we sing them, we grow in faith.

Today we will open in prayer by singing "O Come, All Ye Faithful."

HYMN UMH #234 O Come, All Ye Faithful (verse 1)

1. 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;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

ADVENT WREATH CANDLE LIGHTING

Today the Zins family shares the lighting of the third Advent candle, the candle of Joy.

Reader 1: Today we light the third Advent candle.

Reader 2: Let us pray. O dayspring and sun of righteousness:
Come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.
O king of nations, their desire that binds them in one:
Come and save those whom you formed of clay. Amen.

Reader 3: The first candle reminded us of hope. The second candle reminded us of peace.
The third Advent candle is the candle of joy —the joy of Mary in bearing God's Son, the joy of God in the giving of God's own self, the joy in our hearts as we receive the gift once more.

Reader 4: May the light of hope, peace, and joy burn brightly in our hearts all our days.

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Carols are at the very heart of Christmas. In the Middle Ages, carols were a form of sacred folk music used by the church as a teaching tool.

One of Charles Wesley's earliest hymns was a Christmas carol recalling the hope of the nation Israel. Many centuries before the birth of Christ, the Israelites looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, the Anointed One. In the midst of the years of captivity and exile, God had promised this Holy Child. He was to be the Redeemer of the world.

HYMN UMH #196 Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus (all verses)

1. Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

2. Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;

by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Many centuries after the birth of Jesus, a young Episcopal preacher from Philadelphia visited the Holy Land. On Christmas Eve in 1865, he rode from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, passing through the fields where the shepherds had kept their sheep. He attended a service not far from the place where the Holy Child had been born.

Two years later, his Sunday school needed a Christmas carol for their annual program. With memory of that earlier night still vivid in his mind, Brooks wrote the words, "O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie! Above thy deep and dreamless sleep The silent stars go by." His friend Lewis Redner struggled to write the tune to accompany the words but on the night before the program, he woke from his sleep singing the tune we know as "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

HYMN UMH #230 O Little Town of Bethlehem (verse 1)

1. 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.

Charles Wesley wanted people to understand the Christmas message. In keeping with the tradition of using carols to teach, he wrote a poem in 1739. The first two lines read

Hark! how all the welkin rings,
"Glory to the King of Kings"

George Whitefield liked the message but found a more singable way to express it. He rearranged the poem, and it was ready for music.

Felix Mendelssohn had written a piece of music and his music and Charles Wesley's words were perfect for each other, and so we have "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing."

HYMN UMH #240 Hark! the Herald Angels Sing (all verses)

1. Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King;
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with th'angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new born King!"

2. Christ, by highest heaven adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
late in time behold him come,
offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail th' incarnate Deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!"

3. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!

Light and life to all he brings,
risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth,
born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new born King!"

In the U.S. in the middle of the nineteenth century, the relationship between southern and northern states was tense over the issue of slavery. During this time Edmund Hamilton Sears, an American preacher, wondered how the birth of the Christ Child fit into nineteenth century America. As he read the story over and over, he was moved by the message of the angels: peace on earth. Was that message still for the people of the nineteenth century and yet to come? From Sears' deep concern came the carol "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear."

HYMN UMH #218 **It Came Upon the Midnight Clear (verse 1)**

1. 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 men,
from heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
to hear the angels sing.

Some of us may be uncomfortable with questions of social injustice at Christmas time. We would rather put off thinking about controversial matters until the Christmas tree has been taken down and the wrapping paper is out of sight. Shall we sing about something more comfortable, like the Baby in the manger? This is one of the best-known Christmas carols, particularly among children. "Away in a Manger"

HYMN UMH #217 **Away in a Manger (all verses)**

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

From nineteenth century France, "He Is Born" expresses the joy surrounding the birth of a child, but especially the birth of the Son of God. In the pattern of the Psalms, this song is about celebrating with instruments the fulfillment of the prophecy of his coming. In the true spirit of Christmas, it encompasses the whole world in its prayer for heavenly peace.

HYMN UMH #228 **He Is Born (verse 1)**

1 Thru long ages of the past,
prophets have foretold his coming;
thru long ages of the past,
now the time has come at last!

He is born, the holy Child,
play the oboe and bagpipes merrily!
He is born, the holy Child,
sing we all of the Savior mild.

People in almost every culture around the world have told the story of the birth of Jesus. The variety of music to which the familiar story has been set provides a colorful background for its retelling in any language. Poland has given us a carol about the baby in the manger. It is a lullaby for the Baby.

HYMN UMH #229 **Infant Holy, Infant Lowly (all verses)**

1. Infant holy, infant lowly,
for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing,
Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing,
noels ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the babe is Lord of all.

2. Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story,
tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the babe was born for you.

In Salzburg, Austria, in the early nineteenth century, a young priest and his musician friend discussed the lack of a perfect Christmas hymn. After learning that his church organ was not working and repairs could not be made until after Christmas, Father Joseph Mohr decided that he must write his own Christmas hymn. Father Mohr wrote a poem and sent it over to his friend Franz Gruber. Gruber read it and exclaimed, "Friend Mohr, you have found it—the right song—God be praised" Gruber set the poem to music, and the hymn was completed in time for the Christmas Eve Mass.

The song Joseph Mohr and Franz Gruber presented that night was "Silent Night, Holy Night."

HYMN UMH #239 **Silent Night, Holy Night (all verses)**

1. 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.

2. 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!

3. 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.

4. 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!

Christmas just isn't Christmas without "Silent Night" It gives us a feeling of security and contentment. Like so many other carols, it takes us back to the peace and quiet of that stable two thousand years ago. And as long as the baby Jesus is there, what harm can come to us? But Jesus is not there. Jesus did not remain a baby. He left the stable. He grew and learned and told God's story to all who would listen. If Christmas is to be all that it is meant to be, we too must leave the stable, grow, and learn. We must move beyond the silence of the night. In the fullness of the day we must tell the story of Jesus, the Savior of the World. The African American spiritual says it so well with "Go Tell It on the Mountain".

HYMN UMH #251 Tell It on the Mountain (all verses)

1 While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold throughout the heavens
there shown a holy light.

Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain,
that Jesus Christ is born.

2 The shepherds feared and trembled,
when lo! above the earth,
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed the Savior's birth. (Refrain)

3 Down in a lowly manger
the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn.

PRAYER AND THE LORDS PRAYER

Lord God, we thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. We thank you for all the lives you have touched over the centuries. We thank you for those who have been so deeply moved by your Spirit that they have told his story through song. Remind us often that as we enjoy singing those Christmas carols, our task is to retell the story to everyone who will listen. We pray for peace and for power; in the name of the Baby in the manger who was the Savior of the World and together we pray
Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

OFFERING AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

A hymn is a song of praise written for the purpose of adoration; written to give glory to God the creator, the sustainer, the redeemer. We gathered and offer our hymns to God; to sing of God's unfailing love. Giving is an act of adoration; giving is a

hymn from the depths of our hearts singing thanksgiving and blessing to a God who has offered us so much. God, our great composer will transform our offering into a hymn of justice, mercy, and grace. Now is the time to join the mighty chorus, to open our hearts and allow a new hymn to flow throughout God's creation. Please bring your offering to the church or mail it in. Give glory to God through your giving.

The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9:7: God loves a cheerful giver,
Eugene Peterson in his translation of the Bible says,
"God loves it when the giver delights in the giving."

Let's pray together:

God of grace, it is our delight and our devotion to give these gifts to you. All we are and all we have are yours alone. Accept this joyful offering as a token of our abiding love: use it to bring peace, justice and comfort to all the world, Amen

BENEDICTION

Be people of joy. Let joy live in your heart and share the joy of Christ with all you meet. And join as one in singing

HYMN UMH # 246 **Joy to the World** (all verses)

1. 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.

2. Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. 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.

4. 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Thank you to the Zins family for participating in worship
- Each Wed. between now and Christmas the Mora Sanctuary will be open for personal prayer and communion from 2-6. And Each Sunday between 9-9:30 the Ogilvie sanctuary will be open for personal prayer
- SERVICE TODAY WAS INSPIRED BY A SERVICE WRITTEN BY Shirley Holden Carpenter and published December 21st, 2013 IN MINISTRY MATTERS

As you go out into the wonder of God's creations, share joy, peace, and hope with those you meet. Amen.