



Bethany Presbyterian Church

Graham, North Carolina

www.bethanypreschurch.org

www.facebook.com/bethanypresbyterian

December 24, 2023 – 9:00 pm

Christmas Eve: A Watchnight Vigil



Mary said,
“With all my heart I glorify the Lord!
In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.
He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.
Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored
because the mighty one has done great things for me.
Luke 1:46-49 (CEB)

A WATCHNIGHT VIGIL

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Welcome to our service of worship. Although we are worshipping in a variety of locations, we still affirm that God is present in our worship, whether in-person or virtually. Our prayer is that all who worship with us this day will truly feel the presence of God in this time. Know that you are loved and we are so glad you are here! Parts of today’s liturgy are from Ruth Burgess, Winter: Liturgical Resources for November, December and January (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 2016); and LiturgyLink, <https://www.liturgylink.net>.

Please enter the sanctuary in silence.

We will begin in darkness.

*OPENING SENTENCES

"IN THE DARKNESS," RUTH BURGESS, *SPILL THE BEANS*

In the darkness
we wait for Christmas:
some of us are happy,
some of us are sad.

In the darkness
we wait for Christmas:
we wait for a baby
who is about to be born.

In the darkness
we wait for Christmas:
some of us are believers,
some of us are unsure.

In the darkness
we wait for Christmas:
we wait and we wonder,
we hope for love.

In the darkness
we wait for Christmas:
some of us have houses full of presents,
some of us are struggling to survive.

In the darkness
we wait for Christmas:
we wait for Jesus
to bring light to our world.

In the darkness
we wait for Christmas:
we cannot see each other's faces,
we do not know each other's pains and joys.

In the darkness
we wait for Christmas
and God waits with us.
God is here in this place.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

ELSA PETERS

On this Christmas Eve, we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. As we wonder what this birth means to us, we recall where we have come on this journey.

We recall our experiences of hope, peace, joy, and love. Tonight, we light the candles that marked our journey.

The light of hope... *the first candle is lit*
The light of peace... *the second candle is lit*
The light of joy... *the third candle is lit*
The light of love... *the fourth candle is lit*

On this journey, we have been born into a new hope as the prophet Isaiah recalls:

A child is born to us, a son is given to us,
and authority will be on his shoulders.
He will be named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace

O God, we light the Christ candle. We light the candle of our Savior.

The Christ candle is lit.

We light the Christ candle to remember that the miracle of birth didn't just happen once, but happens every day we choose to see you in our world. God, we see you moving among us in our celebration of Christmas.

Let us pray together:

Holy God, we rejoice in your presence! The birth of your holy child is your answer to our unrest, our confusion and our sorrow. Tonight, we live in Hope, we pray for Peace, we are filled with your Joy, and we share your Love. Now, let us be your Hope, your Peace, your Joy, and your Love in this world, as Christ Jesus grew to teach us all. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN #36:** *In the Bleak Midwinter*

Christina G. Rossetti

In the bleak midwinter,
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter,
Long ago.
Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him,
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign:
In the bleak midwinter
A stable place sufficed
The Lord God incarnate,
Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels
May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air;
But His mother only,
In her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the beloved
With a kiss.

What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man,
I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him:
Give my heart.

A PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

"All this Night," Roddy Cowie

All this night, God's world lies waiting,
sensing more than humans know:
***high on lonely winter hillsides
sheep look up to stars aglow.***
Silence deepens, Heaven trembles,
music ripples on the wind:
***light and glory split the sky,
and song floods ears and hearts and minds.***

Glory breaks on winter hillsides,
sweeping through the town below,
***breaking chains of time and space
to set us singing as we go.***
Glory, sing the heights of Heaven,
Glory, sings the human heart:
God has bound Godself to us
in bonds no force or fire can part. ***Amen.***

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.

Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing;
O rest beside the weary road,
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.

FIRST LESSON

LUKE 1:46-55

PEW BIBLE, 1244

HYMN #24: *Away in a Manger*

William James Kirkpatrick

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the bright 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.

SECOND LESSON

LUKE 2:1-20

PEW BIBLE, 1245

HYMN #56: *The First Nowell*

The first Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay akeeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the east beyond them far,
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and night. **[Refrain]**

And by the light of that same star,
Three wise men came from country far;
To seek for a King was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went. **[Refrain]**

This star drew nigh to the northwest;
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
And there it did both stop and stay,
Right over the place where Jesus lay. **[Refrain]**

Then entered in those wise men three,
Full reverently upon the knee,
And offered there, in His presence,
Their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. **[Refrain]**

Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord;
That hath made Heaven and earth of naught,
And with His blood our life hath bought. **[Refrain]**

SILENT REFLECTION

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

We will celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper today by inviting everyone who wants to participate up front to receive the bread and cup (we use gluten free bread and grape juice). If you are more comfortable remaining seated but would like to participate, raise your hand and we will come to your seat to serve you. We believe that Jesus invites everyone forward to his table to "taste and see," and so we proclaim that all are welcome to participate.

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

A child is born for us in Bethlehem,
wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger;
***and he will be our Shepherd,
feeding his flock in the strength of the Lord.***

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to God our Maker
It is right to give our thanks and praise...

...Therefore we praise you,
joining our voices with the celestial choirs
and with all the faithful of every time and place,
who forever sing to the glory of your name:

***Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.***

***Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest...***

...For great is the mystery of faith:
***Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come again.***

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

COMMUNION BY THE PEOPLE

The gifts of God for the people of God.
Thanks be to God.

SONG DURING COMMUNION

TAIZÉ COMMUNITY

HYMN #842: (GTG) *The Lord is My Light*

The Lord is my light, my light and salvation:
in God I trust, in God I trust.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

You are invited to take your candle, receive the light and pass it on to your neighbor. Please dip your unlit candle into your neighbors lit candle, and then the neighbor alongside you will dip their candle into yours. We will conclude our Christmas Eve service by singing "Silent Night."

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 stand in body or spirit.*

This Week's Calendar:

Sunday, December 24th – Christmas Eve Service & Communion
9:00pm – Worship

Wednesday, December 27th
6:30 – No Choir Practice

Sunday, December 31st – First Sunday of Christmas & Brunch Church
9:45 – Adult Sunday School – **No class**
11:00 – Worship (In-Person & Live Stream)

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love learn serve



Session

Moderator: Rev. Jon Phillips

Clerk: Randy Cousins

Treasurer: Glenn Patterson

Class of 2023:

Chip Allen
Randy Cousins
Shelby Smith

Class of 2024:

Karen Maxwell
Kim Snyder
Tracey Troxler

Class of 2025:

Donna Mitchell-Ayers
Tina Patterson
Nancy Purcell

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