

*It is an honor to share in this service with you today as we celebrate the birth of our Savior and King!
Please participate with us in this service by reading aloud together, the portions typed in *italics*.

Rejoice, for God is with us -- Emmanuel.

**In the darkness of our world shines God's holy light.*

Now there is reason to hope, to love, to laugh, to live.

**God is truly with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God!*

"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;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation;
O sing, all ye citizens
of heaven above!
Glory to God,
all glory in the highest;
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 glory given;
Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing.
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

**Gracious God,*

With joy and thanksgiving we gather as your people. We have come to hear again the timeless story of Christ's birth.

*In the excitement of this night, quiet our hearts
that we may know the peace and fullness of this holy time.*

Shine, O Light, in the darkness of our world.

Sing, O angels, in the stillness of our hearts,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those God favors." This we pray in the name of the Child of Bethlehem. Amen.

The Prophecy of the Messiah

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:1-2, 4-5

**Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Emmanuel, Emmanuel, God with us, Emmanuel.*

The Coming of Jesus is Announced to Mary and Joseph

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 2The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called[a] the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your

relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.”

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

Luke 1:26-38

“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.

The Preparations for the Birth of Jesus

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Luke 2:1-5

“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 shine’th
The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight

Jesus is Born

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Luke 2:6-7

“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 heavens
Looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus
Asleep on the hay.

Jesus' Birth is Announced to the Shepherds

An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Luke 2:9-14

“Beautiful Star of Bethlehem”

Oh beautiful star of Bethlehem
Shining far through shadows dimmed
Giving the light for those who long have gone

Guiding the wise men on their way
Unto the place where Jesus lay
Oh beautiful star of Bethlehem
shine on

Oh beautiful star
The hope of light
Guiding the pilgrims Through the night
Over the mountains
'till the break of dawn

Into the land of perfect day
It will give out a lovely ray
Oh beautiful star of Bethlehem shine on

Oh beautiful star

(beautiful, beautiful star)
of Bethlehem
(star of Bethlehem)
Shine upon us until the glory dawns

“The First Noel”

The first Noel the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay:
In fields where they lay a keeping their sheep
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Noel Noel Noel Noel
Born is the King of Israel.

The Shepherds Find the Baby Jesus

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

Luke 2:15-18

The Wisemen Bring Gifts to Jesus

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

“‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down

and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Matthew 2:1-11

“The First Noel”

And by the light of that same star
Three wise men came from the country far;
To seek for a King was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
Born is the King of Israel.

**Merciful God, we confess that often we find darkness more comfortable than light.*

We confess that we find your good news frightening and unsettling, especially when we consider its demands as well as its promises.

We confess that Christmas has become more to us than the birthday of the Christ, partly because we do not want a Christ-Child in our lives or in our world.

Forgive us, break us, bend us, remake us.

Give us the courage to lay ourselves open to the wonder and healing of Your coming.

Be born again into our world, be born again into our hearts and lives.

Hear now our silent and personal confessions as we prepare ourselves for your nativity.

COMMUNION

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

**We are filled with joy for we have heard good news of great joy.*

We are filled with love for we have tasted the sign of God's great love.

We are filled with hope for the angels still sing in our world and there is a Light for us to follow.

“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

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

Hark the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful, all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

“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 men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

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.