



SAINT LUKE'S
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



December 5, 2024



In Preparation for Worship

Friends, we gather here this evening for comfort and rest from all that might overwhelm us. We will light candles and pray deeply. We will give ourselves permission to simply be – or to rest – or to wrestle with darkness, and to comfort each other and hold faith for one another.

Prelude

The First Nowell *arr. Gary Norian*

Welcome

Shannon Dill

Call to Worship*

Leader: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

All: **The Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth,
and we have seen His glory.**

Leader: In Him was life, and that life was the light of all.

All: **The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.**

Hymn 543*

God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me

Call to Prayer*

David Lower

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Leader: Let us pray.

**God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves,
and for our families and friends who live with the struggles of illness or the pain of
loss. We pray for those who need light and comfort in their lives. We ask for strength
for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past. We ask these things in the
name of Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair
and promise. Amen.**

STORIES OF LIGHT AND WORDS OF GOD'S PROMISES

The candle lighting service includes the lighting of memorial candles along with scripture readings, each followed by a congregational response and a musical response.

As each candle is lit, we are reminded that in the midst of darkness, light will shine.

Light of Remembrance

Exodus 13:17-22

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearer; for God thought, "If the people face war, they may change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of the land of Egypt prepared for battle. And Moses took with him the bones of Joseph who had required a solemn oath of the Israelites, saying, "God will surely take notice of you, and then you must carry my bones with you from here." They set out from Succoth, and camped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Leader: We light this first candle to remember ourselves.

We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens, yet you remain faithful, O God.

All: We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that while lost, we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed.

Music

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

Lindsey Sanders

*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.*

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife
the world has suffered long;
beneath the heavenly hymn have rolled
two thousand years of wrong;
and we at war on earth hear not
the tidings that they bring;
O, hush the noise and cease the strife
to hear the angels sing!*

Light of Comfort

Psalm 121

Michael Sanchez

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

Leader: We light this second candle to remember your faithfulness, God. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain. We lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness, and in knowledge of our own mortality.

All: We remember that though we have journeyed far, we are not far from God.

Music

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Lindsey Sanders

*And you, 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 prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world give back the song
which now the angels sing.*

Light of Love

Isaiah 9:2-7

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.
You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
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.

Leader: We light this third candle to remember the pain of loss:
loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of
joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You,
asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace.

All: We remember that through You all things are possible.

Music

Lo! How a Rose E'er Blooming
arr. Mark Hayes

Jen Weier

Light of Hope

Luke 2:8-19

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!”

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.

Leader: We light this fourth candle to remember the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Christmas, which began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable.

We remember that the loving God who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

All: We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.

Music

Before the Marvel of This Night

Lindsey Sanders

Before the marvel of this night, adoring,
fold your wings and bow;
then tear the sky apart with light and
with your news the world endow.
Proclaim the birth of Christ and peace,
that fear and death and sorrow cease:
sing peace; sing peace; sing gift of peace;
sing peace; sing gift of peace!

The love that we have always known, our
constant joy and endless light,
now to the loveless world be shown, now
break upon its deathly night.
Into one song compress the love that
rules our universe above:
sing love; sing love; sing God is love; sing
love; sing God is love!

Unison Prayer

Loving God, hear our prayers and remind us that
by Your grace, mercy and love light will shine in the midst of darkness.
We ask all these things in the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

The Lord's Supper and Invitation to Light Candles

Communion will be served by coming forward. If you would like to be served where you are sitting, please raise your hand. Everyone is invited to participate in the sacrament. The cup holds grape juice, not wine, during this service. A server with gluten-free wafers will be standing directly in front of the communion table for those who prefer this option.

After you have received communion, you are invited to light a candle from the Christ candle as a sign of hope.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and The Lord's Prayer

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory,
forever. Amen.

Communion Music

O Little Town of Bethlehem with Traumerei
arr. Lauri Wood

Intercession for Healing and Wholeness

Leader: The God of strength moves within us;
People: the God of courage hears our distress.
Leader: The God of hope reveals wholeness to us;
People: the God of healing touches us when we are broken.
Leader: When the pain overwhelms us, when the burden is too heavy,
People: we turn to our God, who is sustaining and redeeming.
Leader: When there is loneliness, when there is isolation,
People: we turn to our God, who is loving and present.
Leader: For God created us, redeemed us and sustains us,
People: and we are not alone.

Closing Hymn 110*

Love Has Come

Benediction*

Postlude*

Angels We Have Heard on High arr. Gary Norian



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