

First Sunday after Christmas
All Saints' Episcopal Church
10:00 AM December 31, 2023

*Preludes: Es ist ein' Ros'
Good Christian friends, rejoice*

*Robin Dinda
Wolfgang Bottenberg*

CALL TO WORSHIP *The people say together the parts in **bold**.*

Light looked down
and saw darkness.

"I will go there," said Light.

Peace looked down
and saw war.

"I will go there," said Peace.

Love looked down
and saw hatred.

"I will go there," said Love.

So
the Lord of Light
the Prince of Peace
the King of Love
came down
and crept in
beside us.

Source: *Cloth for the Cradle*, Iona Community

Love came down at Christmas Hymnal 84

The Christmas Story: A Reading from the Gospel according to Luke

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.

RESPONSE 1:

Into the stable they straggled, poor and dirty,
hardly suitably dressed for polite society.
Had we been Joseph
we would have feared robbery.
Had we been Mary
we would have feared germs around our newborn.
Had we been God
these are not one we would have chosen
to first come and see the Child.
After all, they showed a certain carelessness
about the rules of the church.
Any yet, God-chosen, they came
to kneel and worship...

Source: *Had We Been There* from Kneeling in Bethlehem by Ann Weems

Angels, from the realms of glory Hymnal 93

RESPONSE 2:

A Child Has Been Born—A *Congregational Reading from Isaiah 9*

*The congregation is invited and encouraged to respond to each sentence or phrase with the words or instructions in **bold**.*

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them has the light shined.

(polite applause)
Oh no!
Oh good! (loud applause)

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.

Yes!
Yes!
Rejoice! Hooray! Yes!

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.

Oh! (as if in pain)
Oh! (as if in pain)
Oh! (as if in pain)
Oh good! (loud applause)

For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests on his shoulders;
and he is named

Yes!
Yes!
Relief!

Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.

**Wonderful Counselor
Mighty God
Everlasting Father
Prince of Peace**

His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace.

**Greater and greater
God's Peace!**

He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

**Yes!
Yes!
Thank you, God!
(loud applause)**

Source: Arranged by the Reverend Ernesto Medina for Liturgy for the Whole Church, Susan K. Bock

Unto us a boy is born! Hymnal 98

The Christmas Story: A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew *Matthew 2: 1-2, 9-10*

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." ... When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

RESPONSE 3:

Kid Stuff

The wise guys
tell me
that Christmas
is Kid Stuff...
Maybe they've got
something there—

Two thousand years ago
three wise guys
chased a star
across a continent
to bring
frankincense and myrrh
to a Kid
born in a manger
with an idea in his head...

And as the bombs
crash
all over the world
today
the real wise guys
know
that we've all
got to go chasing stars
again
in the hope
that we can get back
some of that Kid Stuff
born two thousand years ago—

Source: *Frank Horne, December, 1942* from Christmas Gift: An Anthology of Christmas Poems, Songs, and Stories

The snow lay on the ground Hymnal 110

The Christmas Story: A Reading from the Gospel according to John *John 1:1-18*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

RESPONSE 4: *The people say together the parts in **bold**.*

Let the just rejoice,
For their justifier is born.

Let the sick and infirm rejoice,
For their saviour is born.
Let the captives rejoice,
For their Redeemer is born.
Let slaves rejoice,
For their Master is born.
Let free people rejoice,
For their Liberator is born.
Let All Christians rejoice,
For Jesus Christ is born.

Source: Nativity Prayer of St. Augustine, St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-440)

Good Christian friends, rejoice Hymnal 107

Officiant The Lord be with you.
People **And also with you.**
Officiant Let us 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,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Officiant: Let us pray together the collect for today: **Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.**

Prayers for Christmas *The people say together the parts in bold.*

Wondrous God, whose love was made flesh in this holy season; hear us, as we pray, and take to your heart all of our longings and thanks:
Hear us and help us, O God.

Wonderful Counselor, give wisdom to the leaders of the nations, that they might guide us to peace.

**Wonderful Counselor, may your justice and righteousness
be established on the earth.**

Mighty God, make your church to be one, in spirit and truth, strong with courage and rich with grace. Help us to tell the sweet, good news of your love in all we say and do, and especially as we reach toward each other.

Mighty God, may your church be united in serving the world.

Everlasting Father, help all who suffer to remember your love. Bring relief, and strength to endure, to those who are lonely, dying, and in pain. Stay near to those in prison.

**Everlasting Father, may the day come soon
when our tears are wiped away by your own hand.**

Prince of Peace, help us to bring an end to all poverty and racism, which keep your children hungry and powerless. Grant that your peace would rule in our hearts and in our lives.

Prince of Peace, may you come soon to reign among us.

Child of David's throne, may all who live with you in glory help us, by their example and prayer, to find our way home. Give us, especially, the courage of Isaiah, of Mary, and of John. Grant us the wonder of the shepherds and magi. Fill us with the songs of the angels.

**Son of David, make us one with all your saints
who enjoy your presence day and night.**

Wondrous God, thank you for the miracle and grace of Christmas. May we be true, all the year long, to its call to believe the impossible and to make our humble humanity the place of your dwelling. Hear us we pray, and take to your heart all of our longing and thanks; through Jesus the Christ, through the Spirit. **Amen.**

Source: Liturgy for the Whole Church/Susan K. Bock

LIST OF INTERCESSIONS (see bulletin insert)

The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among humankind,
To make music in the heart.

Source: The Mood of Christmas & Other Celebrations by Howard Thurman

God rest you merry, gentlemen Hymnal 105

Closing Prayer

By the way of Bethlehem lead us, O Lord, to newness of life;
by the innocence of the Christ Child renew our simple trust;
by the tenderness of Mary deliver us from cruelty and hardness of heart;
by the patience of Joseph save us from all rash judgment and ill-tempered action;
by the shepherd's watch open our eyes to the signs of your coming;
by the wise men's journey keep our searching spirits from fainting;
by the music of the heavenly choir guide our feet into the way of peace.

Source: *Christmas* by Theodore Parker Ferris in Give Us Grace

The Dismissal

Officiant: Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever

Ephesians 3:20, 21

People: Amen.

Officiant: Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia.

People: Thanks be to God. Alleluia.

Postlude: In dulci jubilo Jacques Bertier