

Eve of the Birth

St. John's Episcopal Church
December 24, 2023
Powell, WY

Welcome

We are so happy you are with us. Please add your voice and heart to the service. Help others find a place near you and greet the person next to you as we prepare to worship together. Please stand and sit as you are comfortable.

Ministers

Altar Guild	Laura Greathouse
Sound	Scott Larsen
Greeters	Doug Ramier Diana Anderson
Worship Leader	Laura Greathouse
Musicians	Kassandra Fell Devin Matthews Josey Nickles Monte Nickles
Reader	Barb Morales
Preacher	Tim Glatzer
Intercessor	Charlotte Patrick
Presider	Megan Nickles
Communion Servers	Jen Litterer-Trevino Oscar Trevino
Communion Bread	Susan McEvoy

Christmastide

The season of Christmas begins on December 24 at sunset, the beginning of the day in the Hebrew tradition. This is why churches generally have evening or midnight services for Christmas Eve. Christmas itself lasts **twelve days**.

Twelve Days of Christmas – yep, that is what the song is about. Amazon.com and other giant retailers have encouraged an erroneous assumption that the Twelve Days end on Christmas Day and must therefore begin on December 14. Not so. The Twelve Days do not come before Christmas day, they begin on Christmas Day, and end on January 5.

Christmastide is twelve days in which to celebrate, perhaps more reflectively than in ages past, the great gift of God that comes to us in the sweet, beguiling form of an infant.

Prelude

“The Sussex Carol,” Craig Duncan.

“Cherry Tree Carol,” Jean Ritchie.

“Veni, Emanuel,” Mignarda.

“Gabriel’s Message,” Sting.

“The Wexford Carol,” The Chieftains, Nanci Griffith.

Welcome Hymn

Verses



1. Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing: "Glo - ry to the
 2. Christ, by high - est heav'n a - dored, Christ, the ev - er -
 3. Hail the heav'n - born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of



1. new - born King; Peace on earth, and mer - cy mild,
 2. last - ing Lord; Late in time, be - hold him come,
 3. Righ - teous - ness! Light and life to all he brings,



1. God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!" Joy - ful, all ye
 2. Off - spring of a vir - gin's womb. Veiled in flesh the
 3. Ris'n with heal - ing in his wings. Mild he lays his



1. na - tions, rise, Join the tri - umph of the skies; With an -
 2. God - head see! Hail th'in - car - nate De - i - ty! Pleased as
 3. glo - ry by, Born that we no more may die, Born to



1. gel - ic hosts pro - claim: "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
 2. man with us to dwell; Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el!
 3. raise us from the earth, Born to give us sec - ond birth.

Refrain



Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King."

Text: 77 77 D with refrain; Charles Wesley, 1707–1788, alt.
 Music: Felix Mendelssohn, 1809–1847; arr. by William H. Cummings, 1831–1915.

Gather

Living God, on this holy night we gather—
to sing with angels, rejoicing in your work;
to wait with Joseph, trusting in your promise;
to sit with Mary, cradling your love,
to stand with shepherds, amazed at your glory,
to welcome children into our family.

May the good news of this night inspire us
to tell the world of our great joy:
for to us is born a Savior,
the Messiah, the Lord.

Glory and praise to you forever!

Amen.

Psalm 146:5-10

⁵ Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD their God,

⁶ **who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;**

who keeps faith forever;

⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free;

⁸ **the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.**

**The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
the LORD loves the righteous.**

⁹ The LORD watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

¹⁰ **The LORD will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.**
Praise the LORD!

Scripture Luke 2:1-20

Sermon

Music “O, Holy Night,” Placide Cappeau, Adolphe Adam.

Prayers

God of steadfast love,
we thank you in this joyful Christmastide
for all the blessings we enjoy:
the shelter of home and the comfort of family and friends;
the company of the faithful with whom we celebrate Christ’s coming;
and for your love, which shines as a light in the darkness.
For these and many other blessings besides, we offer our thanks and praise.

God of mercy,
in this holy season, there are people in need of your tender mercies:
we pray for those who are ill and for those who are recovering;
for those whose sadness is made heavier
by memories of Christmases past or by some present pain.

We pray for those who do not have enough:
enough food, enough money, enough companionship, enough hope.
Because there is not yet peace on earth, we pray for those in harm’s way.
Protect them from war, violence, and cruel oppression.
For these and many other needs, we offer our intercessions.

God of hope,
through long ages, you have given to your people dreams
and a vision of the time when there will be no more war,
no more pain or sorrow, no more death.
We pray this day for the time to be fulfilled,
when we will be reconciled to one another, to all creation, to you.

Fill us with hope as we wait upon your coming realm.
Give us the will to work for justice and peace
and the courage to follow you into every place.
We thank you for dreamers and visionaries
who respond with imagination and joy
to what you are doing in the church and in the world.
We entrust ourselves and those we love to your care.
In Christ’s name we pray.

Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

I believe in God whose light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never smother it.

I believe that on a night like this night in Bethlehem
there was born a Savior,
who is Christ the Lord.

I believe in the Word who has become incarnate, our very flesh and blood,
yet full of grace and truth.

I believe in the blessed appearing of the salvation of our God,
that is for the happiness of all people.

I believe in his name as Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of peace;
Of the increase of his rule and of his unique peace,
there will be no end.
The zeal of the God of hosts will do this.

This I surely believe!

The Peace

The peace of Christ be always with you.

And also with you.

We may greet one another in the name of God.

Invitation to the Offering

Rejoice! For I bring good news and great joy to all people:
today is born to you a Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord.

Music

“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent,” PICARDY.

Eucharist

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

In every time and in every place,
it is right that we should give you thanks and honor,
for you shelter your people from age to age.

You came to us as a brother and a friend,
in a likeness we could recognize as one of our own,
showing us the face of the Most High God.

Through the centuries, your witnesses have taught and proclaimed your Word,
giving shape to the truth that your promises are sure
and your presence everlasting.

In communion with all the saints, with angels and shepherds,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Holy God, author of time, one among us, breath of our bodies,
you are as close to us as skin and infinite as stars.

You came to us as Jesus of Nazareth, child born in a cave, a carpenter and a rabbi,
who on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying,

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Bless us with your presence,
and let your Holy Spirit infuse our hearts and minds with joy
so that we may live to praise you, O God,
holy Trinity, now and forever. **AMEN.**

Lord's Prayer

As our Savior taught us, we now pray.
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

The leader breaks the consecrated bread.
Alleluia! He is born.
Christ the Lord is born this day.
The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us
full of grace and truth.
The Gifts of God for the People of God.

Communion

Please come to the table, whether you are single, married or divorced, drinking, using or sober, abled, disabled, or ill, gay, straight, or discovering, wealthy, getting by or in debt. Christ meets us all.

We approach the altar beginning with those sitting in the last rows; they shall be first. Approach the rail from the left aisle and take a cup; used cups go on the tray on the right. You may receive only bread or only wine. Our Eucharistic bread is handmade and robust. If you prefer a wafer, please tell your server.

Receiving the bread and wine is a central act of worship in the Episcopal Church.

Communion Music

“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly,” Edith M. G. Reed, translator.

“What Child is This,” text: William Chatterton Dix.

Silent Night



1. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, All is calm,
2. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Shep - herds quake
3. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Son of God,

all is bright Round yon Vir - gin Moth - er and Child,
at the sight; Glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,
love's pure light Ra - diant beams from thy ho - ly face,

Ho - ly In - fant so ten - der and mild, Sleep in heav - en - ly
Heav'n - ly hosts sing al - le - lu - ia; Christ, the Sav - ior, is
With the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at thy

peace, Sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!
birth, Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth.

TEXT: *Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht*; Joseph Mohr, 1792-1849; tr. John F. Young, 1820-1885
TUNE: STILLE NACHT, 66 89 66; Franz X. Gruber, 1787-1863

Prayer of Thanks

We stand.

Let us pray.

God our Father,
you have made known to us again
the coming of Jesus Christ:
confirm our faith
and fix our eyes on him
until the day dawns
and Christ the Morning Star
rises in our hearts.
To him be glory
both now and for ever.
Amen.

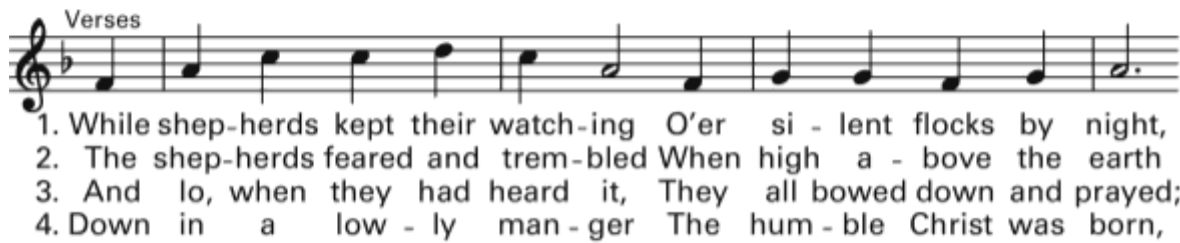
Hymn

Refrain

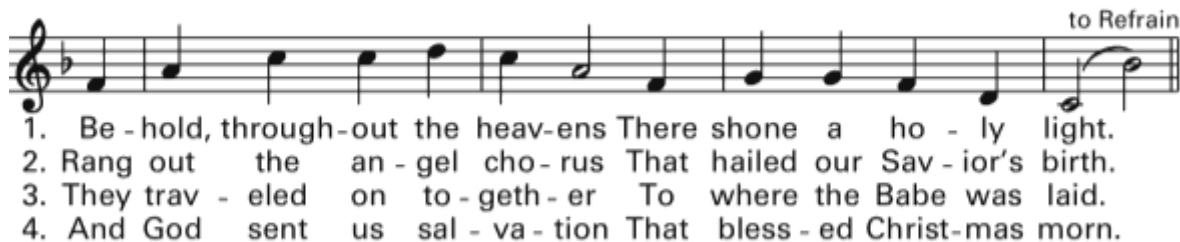


Go, tell it on the moun - tain, O-ver the hills and ev - 'ry -
where; Go, tell it on the moun - tain That Je - sus Christ is born.

Verses



1. While shep-herds kept their watch-ing O'er si - lent flocks by night,
2. The shep-herds feared and trem-bled When high a - bove the earth
3. And lo, when they had heard it, They all bowed down and prayed;
4. Down in a low - ly man - ger The hum - ble Christ was born,



1. Be - hold, through-out the heav-ens There shone a ho - ly light.
2. Rang out the an - gel cho - rus That hailed our Sav - ior's birth.
3. They trav - eled on to - geth - er To where the Babe was laid.
4. And God sent us sal - va - tion That bless - ed Christ - mas morn.

to Refrain

Text: 76 76 with refrain; fr. *American Negro Songs and Spirituals*, 1940; John W. Work, Jr., 1872–1925, alt.
Music: Spiritual.

Sending

Go now, glorifying and praising God
for all you have heard and seen.
We go in peace to love and serve,
in the name of Christ. Amen. Alleluia!

Postlude

“Ding Dong Merrily On High,” The Canadian Brass.
“Bring A Torch, Jeanette Isabella,” Fernando Ortega.