

Worship Service

Christmas Eve, Year A, 24th December, 2022

Luke 1:26-38, Luke 1:39-45, Luke 1:46-5,

Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-7, Luke 2:8-20 NRSV

Prelude

Opening Music

Welcome Guests / Announcements

Pass the Peace

Christmas Eve Call to Worship [responsive]

One: The Prophet Isaiah said: 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.

All: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

One: The Priest Zechariah said before John's birth: By the tender mercy of our God, The dawn from on high will break upon us, To give light to those who sit in darkness, To guide our feet into the way of peace.

All: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

One: The Evangelist John said: What has come into being in him was life And the life is the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, And the darkness did not overcome it.

All: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

One: God is with us God is coming into our lives in a new way The birth of the Christ-child is the renewal of hope A reminder that Christ will come again. Keep watch for the light; it is drawing near.

All: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Carol *O Come All Ye Faithful* **212**

First Lesson: Luke 1:26-38 NRSV - The message of the angel - Roger/Kathy

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,

to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.

He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.

For nothing will be impossible with God."

Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Lighting of the First Advent Candle

Carol *Angels We Have Heard on High* **197**

Second Lesson: Luke 1:39-45 - Good news for two women - Kristi

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit

and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?

For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy.

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Lighting of the second Advent candle

Carol *Joy to the World* **318**

Third Lesson: Luke 1:46-55 - Mary's hymn of praise - Kelly/Matthew

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Lighting of the Third Advent candle

Special Music [video]

[Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming](#)

Sung by the sounding Light Chamber Choir and
Congregation of First Plymouth Church, Lincoln Nebraska
conducted by Tom Trenney accompanied by the
Abendmusik Chamber Orchestra on November 27, 2016

Fourth Lesson: Matthew 1:18-25 - Joseph's Dream - Kelly/Matthew

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.

But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife,

but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Lighting of the fourth Advent candle

Carol *It Came Upon A Midnight Clear* **195**

Fifth Lesson: Luke 2:1-7 - The Birth of Jesus - Bill

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.

This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

All went to their own towns to be registered.

Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Carol *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

191

Sixth Lesson: Luke 2:8-20 - The Shepherds and the Angels – Gretchen

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.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Carol *The First Noel, The Angel Did Say* (verses 1-4 only) **199**

A Call to Serve

Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us, has come into the world.
Let us respond by giving our truest selves,
and sharing the gifts we have been given
with glad and generous hearts.

A Time for Reflection (Video) [*O Holy Night*](#)

performed by the Bloemfontein Children's Choir,
posted to YouTube by Jean Geelen

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

God who gives life to all things,
and richly provides us with everything,
use these our offerings to spread your light
of wonder and peace in the world.

Carol *What Child Is This* **215**

(During his time, we will light our candles and prepare to turn the lights out in the sanctuary)

Christmas Prayer

Fragile God, born in the night – We listen in the clarity of the cold night air.
We hear the hoofs clapping in the dust, a man's soft voice reassuring a tired woman. We hear his voice inquiring, "Is there room?" "Is there room for us?"

Fragile God, born in the night – We know the story. We know that you are coming.
"Is there room?" "Is there room for you?"

Fragile God, born in the night – We see the shadowy figures finding the stable.
"There is no room." We see the man preparing a place in the hay. He makes room.
We see the woman moving heavily, The hours of labor, the sweat, the tears, the cries, the moans, the crushing grip of the hands. We hear the insistent cry of the

child wail out, born at last! "Make room!" "Make room for me!"

Fragile God, born in the night – We hear your cry. We hear from the hills and the pastures, your cry as a newborn child ringing out in the still air, your cry echoed in the thunderous announcement from the skies. We see you in the manger. We travel across the miles to see, your glory as a newborn child lying in a manger, your glory reflected in the star we follow.

Fragile God, born in the night – We have room for you. We are poor scruff shepherds and elegant educated kings. We are servers in restaurants and CEO's of giant corporations. We are villagers hauling water for our families from distant wells. We are neurosurgeons holding life in our well-trained hands. We are survivors of immense disasters struggling to rebuild lost lives.

We are young children entranced with the glitter and mystery in the candle light of this night. We are old grown-ups filled with the emotion of accumulated Christmas nights. We are members of big families joyfully reunited tonight, harried with preparations and seating arrangements for dinner, but glad to be catching up. We are individuals alone, especially aware of the absence of family members, family living far away, family taken by death, family from whom we are estranged, family we never had, -- children we never had.

We are all these and more, all of us aware tonight of the fullness of time, of year following year, another Christmas full of all the Christmases of the years, of hearts filled with hearts, Christmases full of all the people we love and who love us.

This time is very, very full for each of us – yet we have room for you. We come to your manger, each of us, in the stillness of this night, Here we know our profound powerlessness, and here you are – a fragile powerless newborn, yet the newborn child in whom we recognize the ruler of the universe. We hear your newborn cry, the cry we have been waiting for – "Make room! Make room for me!"

Fragile God, born in the night – Meet us here at your manger. Meet us as newborn child meets new parents, come to change our lives forever. Meet us as the newborn who insists that we make room for you, who requires that we reorder our lives to pay attention to you, who demands that we be re-centered on the very center of life.

Fragile God, born in the night – You come as a tiny light in a vast darkness yet that fragile and flickering light changes the darkness completely.

Fragile God, meet us here in the lighting of our small lights, that we may know your awesome power making room among us as the light that shines in the darkness, the fragile light that the darkness cannot overpower.

Fragile God, there is room in our inn.

Be born in our night. Amen.

Carol *Silent Night! Holy Night!* **193**

Benediction

We rejoice in God's steadfast presence in our lives,
and in God's unique presence in the life of Jesus of Nazareth—
born of Mary, growing through childhood into an adult ministry,
in all his life manifesting the peace, love, and justice of God;
his voice undimmed by the centuries his call and his promise as clear to us as it was
to his disciples so long ago.

Come to us, Lord Jesus,
Be born in us this night, in our hearts, our minds, our lives.
May the light of your life be kindled in us,
And lead us to the shining truth, of God with us, God for us, God in us. Amen.

Postlude