

This Night We Are Those Who Hope



Advent Lutheran Church
8840 University City Blvd
Charlotte, NC 28213
(704) 549-1555
www.adventlu.org

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GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

Prelude

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” (vv. 1, 3, 4)

Rob Beyersdorf

Call to Worship: “A Christmas Prayer”

L: When the world was dark and the city was quiet, you came.
You crept in beside us.

And no one knew.

Only the few who dared to believe that God might do something
different.

Will you do the same this Christmas, Lord?

Will you come into the darkness of tonight's world;
not the friendly darkness
as when sleep rescues us from tiredness,

but the fearful darkness,
in which people have stopped believing that war will end
or that food will come or that a government will change
or that the Church cares?

Will you come into that darkness
and do something different to save
your people from death and despair?

Will you come into the quietness of this place,
not the friendly quietness as when lovers hold hands,
but the fearful silence when the phone has not rung
the letter has not come, the friendly voice no longer speaks,
the doctor's face says it all?

Will you come into that darkness, and do something different,
not to distract, but to embrace your people?

And will you come into the dark corners and the quiet places of our
lives?

We ask this not because we are guilt-ridden or want to be,
but because the fullness we long for depends upon us
being as open and vulnerable to you as you were to us,
when you came, wearing no more than diapers,
and trusting human hands to hold their maker.

Will you come into our lives,
if we open them to you and do something different?
When the world was dark and the city was quiet you came.
You crept in beside us.
Do the same this Christmas, Lord.
Do the same this Christmas.
(from Cloth for the Cradle)

“Hope and Expectation” (from *Appalachian Winter*)

Rob Beyersdorf

Lighting of the Advent Wreath with the Christ Candle

L: How fitting that, in the winter’s deepening darkness, we light the Christ Candle and gaze upon its golden grace, for it was in the shadows that God sent his Son, Jesus. How beautiful is it when we gather as one community of faith to share the timeless story that transformed the world with light. For this is the season of wonders and a time for remembering that we are people of hope, peace, joy, and love.

“Long Time Ago” (from *Appalachian Winter*)

Carol Riddell

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

Preparing to Hear God’s Word

L: God is telling a story in our lives.
It’s quite a story – full of the promises God makes and our struggles to trust; full of mystery and angels with surprising news; full of hard endings and unexpected new beginnings.

Come, hear the story
pay attention to the angels’ message
in your heart
in this place and time.

Then join all creation in worshipping the God who tells it, full of grace and truth; who comes in Jesus, the Word made flesh, and makes our story holy.
Amen.

(from Christine Jerrett’s blog at <https://christinejerrett.wordpress.com>)

The Christmas Gospel

Luke 2:1-20

“I’ll Be Home For Christmas” (*adapt. short story by Jim Simons*)

Song of the Day

“Joseph’s Lullaby”

Traven Harrington

Responsive Prayers

L: Glory to God in the highest,

C: and peace to God’s people on earth.

L: Blessed are you, Prince of Peace. You rule the world with truth and justice.

C: Send your gift of peace to all the nations of the world.

L: Blessed are you, Son of Mary. You share our humanity.

C: Gave mercy on the sick, the lonely, and all who suffer this day.

L: Blessed are you, Son of God.

C: You dwell among us as the Word made flesh,

L: that we may bear your light to all the world. Amen.

Christmas Declaration

L: Even if we cannot gather in person

C: Emmanuel, God with us

L: Even if some Christmas traditions have had to go

C: Emmanuel, God with us

L: Even if we might not get to hug family and friends

C: Emmanuel, God with us

L: Even if we cannot sing carols beside each other

C: Emmanuel, God with us

L: Even if Christmas cheer is harder this year

C: Emmanuel, God with us

Candle Lighting

“Silent Night” (*arr. Mannheim Steamroller*)

Annette Nolan

Prayer for Light

L: Let us pray. Almighty God, you have filled us with the new and bright light of the Word who became flesh and lived among us. Let the light of our faith shine in all we are, in all we do and in all we say, so that the darkness of this world may vanish, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SENDING GOD'S PEOPLE

Benediction

L: May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the wise men, and the peace of the Christ child.
May the Almighty God bless you now and forever.

C: **Amen**

Dismissal

L: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Sending Song

"Joyful" (arr. Jim Brickman)

Annette Nolan

