

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
RALEIGH, NC

ORGANIZED MARCH 8, 1812

*Gloria
in excelsis
& Deo*

December 24, 2020

THE CHURCH IN WORSHIP
CHRISTMAS EVE

December 24, 2020

Five o'clock

The Prelude

“Christmas Alleluias”
Sue Crocker, organ

Robert Lau

The Introit

“Greensleeves/Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”
The Childrey Family

Traditional Carols

The Lighting of the Christ Candle¹

John Hollowell and Jesse Vogel

Reader 1: Our time of waiting is over now. Our days of preparation are completed. Christmas is here. What has not been done will have to be left undone. We have witnessed to this very night, this very hour, and we hope that the world has heard the Good News. There are many ways to summarize God's love for the world, but the prophet Isaiah puts it this way (Isaiah 9:2–4, 6–7).

Reader 2:

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. ³You 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. ⁴For 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. ⁶For 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. ⁷His 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 onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Reader 1: Our circle of Advent candles is lit. This evening we light the central candle, the Christ candle, which reminds us that Christ is the light of the world, the center of our lives and the source of hope for the whole world. Christ is born. Praise God!

(Light candle)

Reader 2: (Let us pray) Holy God, we are grateful that the time of waiting and preparing is over and that the light of Christ shines so clearly tonight. May our spirits be lifted and our hearts rejoice, for the world will never be the same again. Grace and truth have come to set us free from all that binds us, and we are grateful beyond the capacity of words to express, amen!

1. O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant,
 2. True God of true God, Light from Light e - ter - nal,
 3. Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion!
 4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py morn - ing,

O come ye, O come ye to Beth - le - hem!
 lo, he shuns not the vir - gin's womb;
 O sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heaven a - bove:
 Je - sus, to thee be all glo - ry given;

Come and be - hold him, born the King of an - gels;
 Son of the Fa - ther, be - got - ten, not cre - a - ted;
 "Glo - ry to God, all glo - ry in the high - est";
 Word of the Fa - ther, now in flesh ap - pear - ing;

Refrain

O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him,

O come, let us a - dore him, Christ the Lord.

On this special night of nights, we are sharing in a sacred story, and celebrating community with gifts of bread and wine. But we have also been reminded that as we gather, if our sister or brother has anything against us we must leave our gifts and first cleanse our hands for the giving. Let us then pray that God will create a clean heart in us.

The Prayer of Confession and Assurance (responsive)²

LEADER: Loving and caring God, you have searched us out and known us, all that we are is open to you. Look not upon our sin but upon our faith. Break down all barriers which we establish against your love. Cover us with the blanket of your peace. And let your justice reach to the ends of the earth.

PEOPLE: **So that we come glad to this celebration.**

LEADER: When our prayers are as dry as an asphalt road in summer, and our spirits like ash after a campfire

PEOPLE: **Drench us with a downpour of mercy!**

LEADER: When we take things for granted and gratitude goes to sleep,

PEOPLE: **Alert us to the excitement and sound of surf rolling in on sandy shores.**

LEADER: When life's abrasive pressures fray us and the busyness of Christmas has stressed us out,

PEOPLE: **Touch us with an encouraging word from a stranger or an embrace of a friend.**

(Silence)

LEADER: Creating Source of Life, you know what we need without our words. Hear our prayers and hear also our silence. Give us strength. Grant us those things we cannot or dare not voice, in the name of the Christ who comes and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1. O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
 2. For Christ is born of Ma - ry, and gath - ered all a - bove,
 3. How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is given;
 4. O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;

A - bove thy deep and dream - less sleep the si - lent stars go by.
 while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - dering love,
 so God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heaven!
 cast out our sin, and en - ter in; be born in us to - day.

Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing Light;
 O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth,
 No ear may hear his com - ing, but in this world of sin,
 We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad ti - dings tell;

the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
 and prais - ing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.
 where meek souls will re - ceive him still the dear Christ en - ters in.
 O come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el.

⁷How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” ⁸Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. ⁹Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

LEADER: This is the Word of the Lord.

PEOPLE: **Thanks be to God.**

¹¹For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹²training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

LEADER: This is the Word of the Lord.

PEOPLE: **Thanks be to God**

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph 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. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And 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.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

¹⁵When 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.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

LEADER: This is the Gospel of Christ.

PEOPLE: **Praise be to you, O Christ.**

Descant

2. Shep - herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous
 4. See with - in a man - ger laid Je - sus, Lord of

1. An - gels we have heard on high sweet - ly sing - ing
 2. Shep - herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous
 3. Come to Beth - le - hem, and see him whose birth the
 4. See with - in a man - ger laid Je - sus, Lord of

strains pro - long? Say, what may the ti - dings be
 heaven and earth! Ma - ry, Jo - seph, lend your aid,

o'er the plains, and the moun - tains in re - ply
 strains pro - long? Say, what may the ti - dings be
 an - gels sing; come, a - dore on bend - ed knee
 heaven and earth! Ma - ry, Jo - seph, lend your aid,

Refrain

which in - spire your heaven-ly song? Ah!
 sing with us our Sav - ior's birth.

ech - o back their joy - ous strains.
 which in - spire your heaven-ly song? Glo
 Christ the Lord, the new - born King.
 sing with us our Sav - ior's birth.

Glo-ri - a in ex-cel-sis De - o! Ah!

ri - a in ex-cel-sis De - o, Glo -

Glo-ri - a in ex-cel-sis De - o!

ri - a in ex-cel-sis De - o.

The Homily

“An Inconvenient Christmas . . . Like Them All”

Christopher Chapman

The Solo

“Sweet Little Jesus Boy”
Greg Flowers, soloist

Robert MacGimsey

The Invitation to the Table

The Prayer of Thanksgiving (responsive)⁴

Michael Hood

LEADER: God of angels and shepherds, we thank you for taking care of Mary and Joseph. We thank you for the warm stable and the soft hay. We thank you that Jesus your Son came to live on earth, and that he was a sweet baby, cradled in his mother's arms. Help us remember that he sometimes cried and got hungry. Help us remember that he was like us in every way, but he was also your holy Son.

PEOPLE: **Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth.**

LEADER: God of all earth's people, we thank you that Jesus grew and became strong. We thank you that he welcomed children and blessed them. We thank you that he taught the people who came to him, and that he healed the sick and fed those who were hungry. Help us to remember that he loved us enough to die for us. Help us to remember that you raised him to life again and that he is our friend and reigns with you forever.

PEOPLE: **Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth.**

LEADER: God of glory, we thank you for Christmas, for laughter and singing, for family and friends, for presents and good food. Help us to remember the people who are hungry, the people who are sick or sad, the people who are afraid. Help us to remember all year long that Jesus is the Prince of peace.

PEOPLE: **Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth.**

LEADER: We thank you, God, for this holy place, for bringing us together at your table, surrounded by your love. We thank you for this holy meal, for inviting us to accept Jesus' gift of himself, for asking us to taste and see how much Jesus loves us. We thank you for this holy night, for the glad songs we sing and the gifts of love we receive.

PEOPLE: **Help us to give ourselves in love and joy. In the name of Jesus our Savior.**

ALL: **Amen.**

The Celebration of Communion

The Charge to Discipleship (responsive)

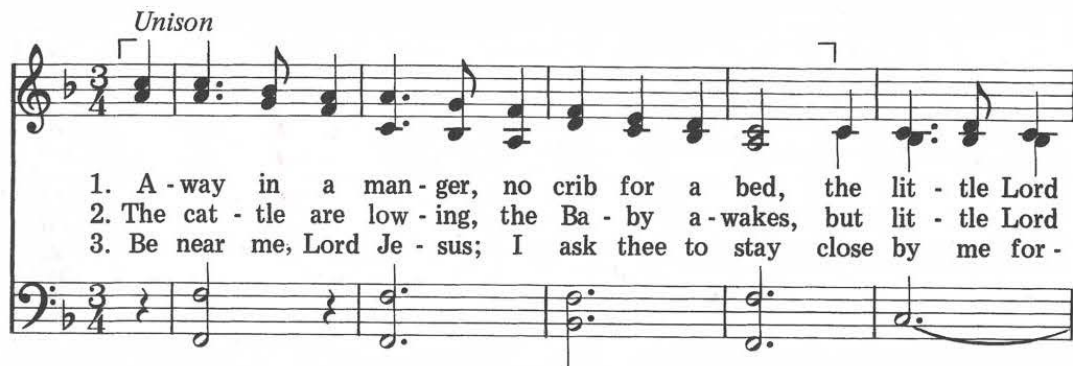
Lynn Lingafelt

LEADER: The God who said, "Let there be light," has caused light to shine in our hearts. That light is the glory of God reflected in the face of Jesus Christ.

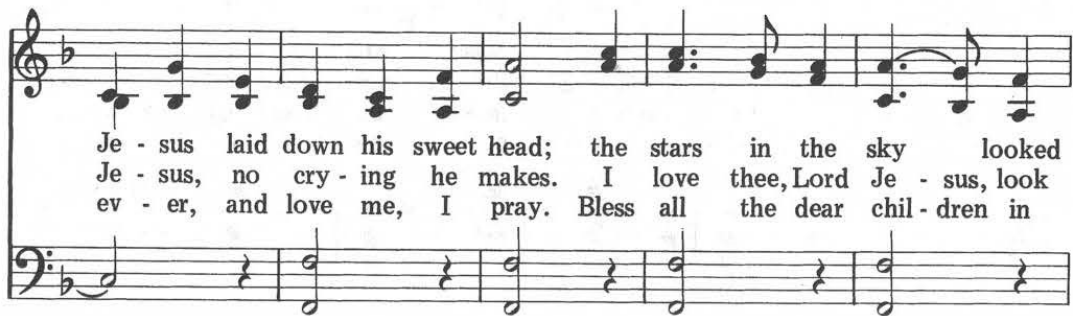
PEOPLE: **As our candles are a sea of light lit from the one light of Christ, so may the church reflect Christ's light and love in the world.**

The Passing of the Light

Unison



1. A - way in a man - ger, no crib for a bed, the lit - tle Lord
 2. The cat - tle are low - ing, the Ba - by a - wakes, but lit - tle Lord
 3. Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask thee to stay close by me for -



Je - sus laid down his sweet head; the stars in the sky looked
 Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes. I love thee, Lord Je - sus, look
 ev - er, and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear chil - dren in



down where he lay, the lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.
 down from the sky and stay by my side un - til morn - ing is nigh.
 thy ten - der care, and fit us for heav - en, to live with thee there.

The Christmas Blessing²

Lynn Lingafelt

LEADER: May the God of Christmas fill your hearts with all joy and peace in believing!

PEOPLE: **Amen!**

LEADER: The blessing of the manger, God's creation all around. The blessing of the shepherds, God's people with feet on the ground. The blessing of the angels, good news for all, and peace for the world . . . Be with you all now and for ever.

PEOPLE: **Amen.**

The Children's Response

The Postlude

"Fantasy on *He Is Born*"
Sue Crocker, organ

arr. Robert Hudson

¹Adapted from *Touch Holiness*, Ruth Duck and Maren Tirabassi, pp. 16–18.

²From *Liturgy for the Celebration of Life*, The Uniting Church of St. James. <http://www.rexaehuntprogressive.com/liturgiesB/xmasevebsj2005>.

³Desc: Copyright © 1979, 1990 by Hope Publishing Company. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission under OneLicense #A-708116.

⁴From *Season of Light and Hope*, by Blair Gilmer Meeks. Copyright © 2005 by Abingdon Press. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The tune and text of "O Come, All Ye Faithful," "O Little Town of Bethlehem," and "Away in a Manger" are in the public domain.

All scripture quotations contained herein are from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Our thanks to Kati Gardner who was the artistic director for the silhouette vignettes and to Mallory, Bailey, Drew, and Jackson Underwood for portraying Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the angel so beautifully.

Calendar Highlights • December 24–January 2, 2020

Thursday, December 24; Friday, December 25; and Monday December 28

Church Office Closed (Christmas)

Thursday, December 24

5:00 Virtual Christmas Eve Service — Communion (YouTube)

Sunday, December 27

11:00 Virtual Worship Service (YouTube)

Tuesday, December 29

10:00 Ministerial Staff Meeting (Library or Zoom)

7:30 Pathfinders Sunday School (Virtual)

Friday, January 1

Church Office Closed (New Year's Day)