

Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren

Long Green and Kanés Rds., near Glen Arm, MD

December 24, 2009

7:00 pm

This room is equipped with a sound loop for the hearing impaired

Christmas Eve

Prelude (organ)

Welcome (Pastor)

Welcome, we are glad you set aside time in your Christmas plans to join us here this evening. And now I invite you to allow God to interrupt your plans. That, after all, is what Christmas is really about, isn't it? God interrupting what we have in mind in order to bring into being something more than we dare imagine.

Let's begin by remembering the plans of a young couple long ago. They and their families had in mind a marriage, with the possibility of babies down the road, and all the things that young people everywhere dream of when looking ahead. All that was altered when God interrupted and this young woman named Mary became pregnant. The story is familiar, but let it not be too familiar that we miss the life-altering consequences of an unexpected child whose father was not Joseph, Mary's betrothed.

As Matthew's gospel remembers it, Joseph wrestled long and hard with what should be done, and he resolved to quietly end his relationship with Mary. But God again interrupted with a dream, and in the dream Joseph was commissioned by God to raise this child as his own son, and to name him, "Jesus." Trying to make sense of all this, Matthew's gospel turned to an obscure passage from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, writing, "*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.'*" (Matthew 1:22-23, Isaiah 7:14)

Will you welcome this One who interrupts what we have in mind in order to bring into being something more than we dare imagine? If so, please stand in body or spirit and join in the first and last verses of "O come, O come Immanuel." The words to all the songs we sing this evening will be projected upon the screen.

Hymn

(vs. 1 & 6) "O come, O come Immanuel"

172 (organ)

(as we sing, 5 persons come forward, each bearing a lit candle, and stand on either side of the worship center.)

1. O come, O come, Immanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
6. O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind.
Bid envy, strife, & quarrels cease.
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Unison Prayer

Immanuel, God-with-us, interrupt and open our eyes to the wonder of this night, that we might catch a glimpse of your glory in the simplicity of these moments. May your light shine!

(First advent candle is lit as congregation says, "May your light shine!")

Immanuel, God-with-us, interrupt and soften our hearts to the message of this hour, that we might turn toward you, and have the way prepared in us for your coming. May your light shine!

(Second advent candle is lit as congregation says, "May your light shine!")

Immanuel, God-with-us, interrupt and open our minds to truly listen to all who speak and sing this evening, that we might hear your voice cry out from many lips. May your light shine!

(Third advent candle is lit as congregation says, "May your light shine!")

Immanuel, God-with-us, interrupt and fill our spirits with the courage to admit when we are lost and the insight to recognize that we have been found. May your light shine!

(Fourth advent candle is lit as congregation says, "May your light shine!")

Immanuel, God-with-us, with eyes open, hearts softened, minds listening, and spirits full, we rejoice that you interrupt what we have in mind in order to bring into being something more than we dare imagine. May your light shine!
Amen.

(Center Christ candle is lit as congregation says, "May your light shine!")

A medley of carols (guitars)

O come, all ye faithful

1. G D G D G C G D
O come, all ye faithful, Joy - ful and tri - um-phant,
 Em D A D..G D G D..A⁷ D
O come ye, O come ye, to Beth - le - hem.
 G D⁷ G D⁷ G D G Em A D
Come and be - hold Him, born the king of angels
 G G D G D⁷ G D
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us a - dore him,
G D⁷ G D Em D G..C G..D⁷ G
O come, let us a - dore him, Christ the Lord.

3. G D G D G C G D
Sing, choirs of angels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,
 Em D A D G D G D..A⁷ D
Sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heav'n a-bove;
 G D⁷ G D⁷ G D G Em A D
Glo - ry to God, all glo - ry in the highest.
 G G D G D⁷ G D
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us a - dore him,
G D⁷ G D Em D G..C G..D⁷ G
O come, let us a - dore him, Christ the Lord.

Hark! the herald angels sing

1. G D G D G Bm C G D⁷ G
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glo-ry to the new-born king!
 G D Em G A⁷ Bm⁷ A⁷ D G A⁷ D
Peace on earth and mer-cy mild, God and sin-ners re -con-ciled."
 G D⁷ G D G D⁷ G D
Joyful all ye na-tions rise, join the triumph of the skies,
 C Am E⁷ Am D⁷ G D⁷ G
With th'angelic host pro-claim "Christ is born in Beth-le - hem."
 C Am E Am D⁷ G D⁷ G
Hark the herald an - gels sing, "Glory to the newborn king."

3. G D G D G Bm C G D⁷ G
Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of right-eous-ness!
 G D Em G A⁷ Bm⁷ A⁷ D G A⁷ D
Light and life to all He brings, ris'n with healing in his wings.
 G D⁷ G D G D⁷ G D
Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,
 C Am E⁷ Am D⁷ G D⁷ G
Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
 C Am E Am D⁷ G D⁷ G
Hark the herald an - gels sing, "Glory to the newborn king."

There's a song in the air

1. G D7 G D7
There's a song in the air! There's a star in the sky!
 G D A7 D
There's a mother's deep prayer and a baby's low cry!
 G D7
And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
 G C D7 G
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!
4. G D7 G D7
We rejoice in the light, and we echo the song
 G D A7 D
That comes down through the night from the heavenly throng.
 G D7
Ay! We shout to the lovely evangel they bring,
 G C D7 G
And we greet in his cradle our Savior and King!

Scripture Luke 1:26-38

(reader 1:)

Our singing this evening is but an echo of a song that rings out even when we have no voice to join in the chorus. Some among us have faced difficult times this year, and it may be hard to sing out, “Glory.” Remember that God not only interrupts our plans, he also steps into our troubles. Furthermore, do not forget that a heavenly host accompanies God’s people, so that the song goes on.

Let’s turn to Luke’s account and recall that initial interruption, when Mary’s life was forever changed. Listen.

(reader 2:)

“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.”

Song

“Let it be”

(guitars)

G D Em C
When I find myself in times of trouble, mother Mary comes to me,
G D C...(B bass)...(A bass)...G
speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

G D Em C
And in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me,
G D C...(B bass)...(A bass)...G
speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

Em D C G
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be.
G D C...(B bass)...(A bass)...G
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.

G D Em C
And when the broken hearted people living in the world agree,
G D C...(B bass)...(A bass)...G
there will be an answer, let it be.

G D Em C
For though they may be parted there is still a chance that they will see,
G D C...(B bass)...(A bass)...G
there will be an answer. let it be.

Em D C G
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be.
G D C...(B bass)...(A bass)...G
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.

G D Em C
And when the night is cloudy, there is still a light, that shines on me,
G D C...(B bass)...(A bass)...G
shine until tomorrow, let it be.

G D Em C
I wake up to the sound of music, mother Mary comes to me,
G D C...(B bass)...(A bass)...G
speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

Em D C G
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be.

G D C...(B bass)...(A bass)...G
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.

Em D C G
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be.

G D C...(B bass)...(A bass)...G
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.

C...(B bass)...(A bass)...G...(F# bass)...(E bass)...D..C..G

C...(B bass)...(A bass)...G...(F# bass)...(E bass)...D..C..G

Scripture Luke 2:1-7

(Reader 3:)

Mary did as she was commissioned to do. She visited her aunt Elizabeth, who had herself been interrupted by God with a child. Can you imagine being pregnant at age ... well, actually Luke's gospel is kind and doesn't say how old Elizabeth was, just that she and her husband Zechariah "*both were getting on in years.*" And yet this older woman, who had been barren her entire life, would give birth to John the Baptist. The story of these two pregnant women, Mary and Elizabeth, meeting is significant enough to be remembered by Luke. It was a time to greet each other with a blessing, and a moment to magnify the Lord who interrupts human affairs – scattering the plans of those who have wealth and power and raising up those who do not.

Nine months went by, and the plans of Mary and Joseph shifted. Of course, God is not the only one who interrupts. The next scripture begins with an intrusion of the powers that be into everyone's life. It was not a good time for a pregnant woman to travel, but when Caesar says move, you may not have a choice. However, God stepped in even as the Roman Empire issued its commands, and altered the situation, taking over Caesar's plan and making it into God's plan. Listen.

(Reader 4:)

"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.”

A Medley of carols (guitars)

All through the night

1. G C A D C D⁷ G
 Sleep, my child, and peace attend thee, All through the night;
 G C A D C D⁷ G
 Guardian angels God will send thee, All through the night.
 Am G Am Bm C Bm Am G
 Soft the drow - sy hours are cree - ping,
 Am G D⁷ Em G D⁷ Em D
 Hill and vale in slum - ber sleep - ing,
 G C A D C D⁷ G
 God his loving vigil keeping, All through the night.

Away in a manger

(tune: Mueller – 1951 *red* Brethren Hymnal #137)

1. G C G
 Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
 D⁷ C G
 the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
 G C G
 The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
 D⁷ G Am D⁷ G
 the little Lord Jesus, a-sleep in the hay.

2. G C G
 The cattle are lowing, the baby a-wakes,
 D⁷ C G
 but little Lord Jesus, no cry - ing he makes.
 G C G
 I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,
 D⁷ G Am D⁷ G
 and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Infant holy, infant lowly

1. G D G G/B C D⁷ G
 Infant holy, infant lowly, for His bed a cattle stall;
 D⁷ G D⁷ G G/B C D⁷ G
 Oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
 C Am D Bm Em Am D^{sus} D
 Swiftly winging angels singing, bells are ringing, tidings bring-ing:
 G Am D⁷ Em Bm G/B C G/D D⁷ G
 Christ the Babe is Lord of all, Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
2. G D G G/B C D⁷ G
 Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new,
 D⁷ G D⁷ G G/B C D⁷ G
 Saw the glory, heard the story - tidings of a gos-pel true.
 C Am D Bm Em Am D^{sus} D
 Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the mor - row:
 G Am D⁷ Em Bm G/B C G/D D⁷ G
 Christ the Babe was born for you, Christ the Babe was born for you!

Mary Did You Know

Intro: Bm ... Bm/A ... Em ... F^{#7} (2x)

Bm Bm/A Em F^{#7}
Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?

Bm Bm/A Em F^{#7}
Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?

Em A⁷ D A/C# Bm
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new;
Em F^{#7}
The child that you delivered will soon deliver you?

Bm Bm/A Em F^{#7}
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?

Bm Bm/A Em F^{#7}
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will calm the storm with His hand?

Em A⁷ D A/C# Bm
Did you know that your baby boy has walked where an-gels trod?
Em F^{#7}
When you kiss your little baby, you kiss the face of God!

Bm ... Bm/A ... Em ... F^{#7} (2x)

Em A⁷ D A/C# Bm
The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live a-gain.

Em A⁷ D F^{#7}
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak the praises of the Lamb.

Bm Bm/A Em F^{#7}
Mary, did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all cre-a-tion?

Bm Bm/A Em F^{#7}
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations?

Em A⁷ D A/C# Bm
Did you know that your baby boy is Heaven's perfect Lamb?

Em F^{#7}
The sleeping child you're holding is the great I Am!

A light-hearted skit “The Birthday Party” (youth)

We interrupt this service with a few moments of levity. We shift from a cattle stall in Palestine 2,000 years ago to the present day home of _____, and a celebration that is about to take place. Imagine....

Can be found here: http://rockhay.tripod.com/worship/orders/2009/09-12-24-Christmas_Eve-skit.pdf

A Carol “Good Christian friends, rejoice” (vs. 1) (guitars)

- FC
1. Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
F/A C⁷ F C⁷ F Gm/B^b F/C C⁷ F
Give ye heed to what we say; Je - sus Christ is born today!
F/A C⁷ F C⁷ Dm Gm/B^b F/C C⁷ F
Ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now;
Dm A^{sus} A⁷ Dm...C F Gm C F
Christ is born to - day! Christ is born to - day!

Scripture Luke 2:8-20

(Reader 5:)

Whose birthday is it, anyway? ... We continue with the Christmas story as told by Luke. This portion is all about God interrupting a quiet night and motivating a group of men to get up and do what they would never have considered doing on their own. Listen:

(Reader 6:)

“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.”

Hymn “Angels we have heard on high” 197 (Organ)

1. Angels we have heard on high, singing sweetly through the night,
and the mountains in reply echoing their brave delight.
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.
2. Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why these songs of happy cheer?
What great brightness did you see? What glad tidings did you hear?
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.
3. Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing.
Come, adore on bended knee Christ, the Lord, the newborn king.
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.
4. See him in a manger laid whom the angels praise above.
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while we raise our hearts in love.
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Scripture Matthew 2:1-12

(Reader 7:)

It didn't all happen on one night, you know. We pull together the biblical stories surrounding the birth of Jesus and try to fit them into a nice, neat little package. But God is not so easily contained. Christmas is not just a one-day affair. God breaks into every day. Take the account as Matthew's gospel remembers it. There is no discussion in Matthew of a Roman census, a journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, a full house at some Inn, nor any talk of shepherds and sheep. The birth itself is hardly mentioned. What is recalled is how some strange visitors from the east came and interrupted things, stopping by Jerusalem on the way and upsetting the plans of King Herod. When did these wise men finally arrive in Bethlehem? Tradition places the date as 12 days after Jesus was born, a day the Christian calendar celebrates as "Epiphany." Even though tomorrow is only "the first day of Christmas," let's draw these men bearing gifts into our storytelling tonight. Listen.

(Reader 8:)

“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 King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’” Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’

(Reader 9:)

“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. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.”

A Medley of Carols (guitars)

We three Kings

Em B⁷ Em B⁷ Em
We three Kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse a-far,
Em D G D⁷ G D⁷ Em B⁷ Em
Field and fountain, moor and moun-tain following yon - der star.
D⁷ G C G C G
O star of wonder, star of night, Star with royal beauty bright,
Em D Bm C G D⁷ G C G
Westward lead - ing, still pro - ceed - ing, guide us to thy perfect light.

What child is this

Em G D Em Am B
What child is this who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping,
Em G D Em B Em^{sus4} Em
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keep - ing?
Bm G D Em Am/C B
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Bm G D Em B Em^{sus4} Em
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud, the Babe, the son of Ma - ry!

Em G D Em Am B
So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh, come peasant, king, to own him.
Em G D Em B Em^{sus4} Em
The King of Kings salvation brings, let loving hearts en-throne him.
Bm G D Em Am/C B
Raise, raise the song on high; the virgin sings her lullaby.
Bm G D Em B Em^{sus4} Em
Joy, joy for Christ is born, the Babe, the son of Ma - ry!

God rest you merry, gentlemen

Em B7 Em Am Em C B7
God rest you merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay,
Em B7 Em Am Em C B7
Remember Christ our sav - ior was born on Christmas day,
E7 Am Em Bm Em D
To save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray,
G D Em B7 C A7 D
O, tidings of com - fort and joy, comfort and joy,
G D Em B7 Em
O, tid - ings of com - fort and joy

Tidings of comfort and joy (Pastor)

This is the story as we have received it – our “tidings of comfort and joy.” Please take note: we just sang “tidings,” not “tidy.” This good “news” (which is what “tidings” means) is not all nice and “tidy.” Matthew’s story, for instance, goes on to mention the terrible actions of King Herod and how Joseph and Mary and their infant son, Jesus, escaped and for a while became

homeless refugees in Egypt. You can't simply sweep something like that under the rug in an effort to tidy up for Christmas. That part of the story actually sounds all too familiar. Just read the newspaper. The real "tidings," the good news is that the verb "tidy" means "to put into order," which is what God was doing when he interrupted things long ago on that first Christmas. "*In all things,*" the apostle Paul wrote, "*God is working for good...*" Even amid poverty, violence and homelessness.

Remember, you "merry gentlemen" and gentlewomen, that the word "comfort" isn't a warm, snuggly blanket on a cold winter's day. Within it lies the word "fort" (spell it out: f.o.r.t), which is a stronghold. To "**com**fort****" is to give strength to those who are weak. Remember, also, that the word "joy" does not imply merely a moment of "happiness" in an otherwise dreary existence. "Joy" - you see - runs deep and wide, and does not depend upon everything being perfectly in place, nice and tidy, in order for us to experience it. We sometimes work so hard to make Christmas become a happy time, that we forget how to simply receive the good tidings like a child.

In the original language of the New Testament, the word "joy" shares the same root as the words "grace" and "gift." God's grace is almost always received by us like a surprise, rarely deserved but freely given. "*God so loved the world that he gave his only son,*" John's gospel states in a way that interrupts how we normally view things. In order to see what is really real, Jesus said, one needs to totally shift angles and see the world from a different perspective, heaven's point of view. That's what "born again" or "born from above" means. "*God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" Surprise! God loves deeply! Surprise! God gives greatly! Surprise! God interrupts our lives with grace and joy!

Scripture John 1:1-5

(As this scripture is read, six persons go to the Christ candle and light their own candles. They then proceed down the aisle – two lighting the first pew and back, the next two heading a third of the way back and lighting that pew and back, and the final two going $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way back and lighting that pew and back.)

(Reader 10:)

"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."

Carol

“Silent Night”

(guitars)

1. C G⁷ C
1. Silent, Night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright
 F C F C
Round yon virgin mother and child! Holy infant so tender and mild,
 G⁷ C G⁷ C
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

2. C G⁷ C C
2. Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight,
 F C F C
Glories stream from the heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing Alleluia;
 G⁷ C G⁷ C
Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!

3. C G⁷ C C
3. Silent Night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light,
 F C F C
Radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
 G⁷ C G⁷ C
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

4. C G⁷ C C
4. Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light
 F C F C
With the angels let us sing Alleluia to our King
 G⁷ C G⁷ C
Christ the Savior is born, Jesus the Savior is born!

A Unison Christmas Confession

(Worship Leader:)

We were heavy with sorrow, but joy interrupted.
We were deep in the night, but a star appeared.
We were silent with sadness, but the heavens rang.
 And the splendor shone around them
 When the time had fully come.

We were hardened by conflict, but love intervened.
We were frightened by shadows, but light took them away.
We were haunted by fears, but a child brought us hope.
 And she laid him in a manger
 When the time had fully come.

We were dismal and defeated, but faith set us on fire.
We were weary and complaining, but our hearts discovered praise.
We were doubtful and confused, but a door to life was opened.
 And the guiding star went before them
 When the time had fully come.

We were arrogant and angry, but his innocence disarmed us.
We were cruel, crude, and clumsy, but his grace made all things new.
We were selfish, narrow, greedy, but his joy we had to share.
 And they offered him their treasured gifts
 When the time had fully come.

We were sheep who had lost their way, but the shepherd knew our names.
We were strangers without a country, but our kingdom came to us.
We were children far from home, but God sent his Son to guide.
 And the Word was flesh among us
 When the time had fully come.

**Hymn* “Joy to the World” (organ)

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room, and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and heav'n and nature sing.

2. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their our songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
3. No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.
4. He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness, and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

**Benediction* (Pastor)

Before we end this time of worship, let me invite you to the fellowship hall afterward to share in some light refreshments and good cheer before you head back home. Also, as you know, services were cancelled last Sunday, and thus there was no collection taken. Do understand that bills still need to be paid, commitments honored, outreach extended, the church's work still goes on. Therefore, a milk can with a hole in the lid is situated on the table for you to give an offering, as you are so moved. Please respond generously. ... For now,

It is good to have been here!
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in deepest night, are lit up with a brilliant sight.
Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.
The spread of his influence and of his peace will never end.

Therefore, go out into the world with great joy,
and the grace of Bethlehem's matchless Child,
the love of the God who never ceases to amaze,
and the fellowship of the Spirit who never wearies,
will be with you this holy night and evermore.
Thanks be to God!

**Postlude*

Credits

Welcome – by Peter L. Haynes, © 2009

Hymn – “O come, O come, Immanuel” – text is anonymous, ca. 6th-7th century; vs. 1 translated by John M. Neale, 1851, vs. 6 by Henry Sloane Coffin, 1916. tune: “Veni Emmanuel” a trope melody from 15th century.

Unison Prayer - by Peter L. Haynes, © 2009

Hymn Medley

“O come, all ye faithful” – text by John F. Wade, 1743, translated by Frederick Oakley and others, 1841.

“Hark! The herald angels sing” – text is by Charles Wesley and others, 1739, altered. Music by Felix Mendelssohn, 1840, adapted by William H. Cummings, 185

“There’ a song in the air” – text by Josiah G. Holland, music by Karl P. Harrington

Scripture - Luke 1:26-38

Preface - by Peter L. Haynes, © 2009

Text – NRSV - The New Revised Standard Version, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Song – “Let it be” - by John Lennon and Paul McCartney, Copyright ©1969 EMI Records

Scripture – Luke 2:1-7

Preface – by Peter L. Haynes, © 2009

Text – NRSV (see above)

A Medley of Carols

“All through the night” – text by Sir Harold Boulton, tune, *Ar Hyd Y Nos*, is a traditional Welsh melody

“Away in a manger” – text is anonymous, 1880’s (tho’ some attribute it to Martin Luther, 1500’s, music attributed to Carl Mueller or James R. Murray

“Infant holy, infant lowly” – Polish carol and folk melody, translated by Edith M.G. Reed, 1925

Song – “Mary did you know” - by Buddy Greene and Mark Lowry, ©1991, 1993 Word Music, LLC, Rufus Music, CCLI #1347096

A light hearted Skit – “The Birthday Party”
Youth Specialties

A Carol – “Good Christian friends, rejoice” – text: In Dulci Jubilo, 14th century, translated by John M. Neale, 1853, altered; music from Geistliche Lieder, 1535, harmonized by Robert L. Pearsall.

Scripture – Luke 2:8-20

Preface – by Peter L. Haynes, © 2009

Text – NRSV (see above)

Hymn – “Angels we have heard on high” – original text unknown author, 1855, altered by Earl Marlatt, 1937, tradition French carol, 1855.

Scripture – Matthew 2:1-12

Preface – by Peter L. Haynes, © 2009

Text – NRSV (see above)

A Medley of Carols

“We three kings” – by John H. Hopkins

“What child is this” – text by William Dix, 1865, tune, *Greensleeves*, is a traditional English melody.

“God rest you merry gentlemen” – a traditional English carol, author/composer unknown

Tidings of Comfort and Joy – by Peter L. Haynes, © 2009

Scripture – John 1:1-5 – NRSV (see above)

Carol – “Silent Night” – text by Joseph Mohr, music by Franz Gruber, 1818

A Unison Christmas Confession - by Kenneth I. Morse, from “In Straw and Story,” p.80, Brethren Press, copyright 1977

Benediction

Closing words – by Peter L. Haynes, © 2009

Blessing - by Bruce Prewer, Uniting Church in Australia.

<http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocC/C05xmase.htm>