

# Christmas Eve

Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren  
Glen Arm, MD  
December 24, 2010

## Gathering Music

Welcome

Pastor Pete

Prelude Solo

“O Holy Night”

Meghan Knight

Scripture

John 1:1-5, 14

Georgia (1) & Sarah (2) Smith  
*(from pulpit)*      *(from lectern)*

- 1 - In the beginning was the Word,
- 2 - and the Word was with God,
- 1 - and the Word was God.
- 2 - He was in the beginning with God.
- 1 - All things came into being through him,
- 2 - and without him not one thing came into being.
- 1 - What has come into being in him was life,
- 2 - and the life was the light of all people.
- 1 - The light shines in the darkness,
- 2 - and the darkness did not overcome it...
- 1 - And the Word became flesh and lived among us,
- 2 - and we have seen his glory,
- 1 - the glory as of a father's only son,
- 2 - full of grace and truth.

Hymn

(vs. 1-2) “Let all mortal flesh keep silence”

463

1.  
Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand.  
Ponder nothing earthly-minded, for with blessing in his hand  
Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.
2.  
King of kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth he stood,  
Lord of lords in human vesture, in the body and the blood,  
he will give to all the faithful his own self for heavenly food.

## Opening Prayer

Mike (1) & Gail (2) Hanna

*(from pulpit) (from lectern)*

- 1 - O God, who sent your Son into our world so silently that many in Bethlehem were not even aware of his birth,
- 2 - you call us to share this wondrous and marvelous story.
- 1 - Help us to remember the story and to learn the truths in it.
- 2 - As the Christ child came as a gift to us, so may our retelling of the story be a gift to others. Amen.

## Lighting the Advent Wreath

Mike (1) & Gail (2) Hanna

[overhead .ppt picture Advent Wreath]

- 1 - As we have journeyed toward this night, the lights of Advent have guided our way.

- 2 - Upon the wreath, these candles have reminded us

[overhead .ppt picture of bulletin cover for 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent – “Keep Awake”]

- 1 - to “Keep Awake,”

*(candlelighter re-lights 1<sup>st</sup> candle)*

[overhead .ppt picture of bulletin cover for 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent – “Prepare the Way of the Lord”]

- 2 - to “Prepare the Way,”

*(candlelighter re-lights 2<sup>nd</sup> candle)*

[overhead .ppt picture of bulletin cover for 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent – “Go and Tell”]

- 1 - to “Go and Tell,”

*(candlelighter re-lights 3<sup>rd</sup> candle)*

[overhead .ppt picture of bulletin cover for 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent – “Name him Emmanuel”]

- 2 - and to “Name Him Emmanuel,”

*(candlelighter re-lights 4<sup>th</sup> candle)*

- 1 - which means, “God is with us.”
- 2 - O come, ***all*** ye faithful,
  - 1 - not just those who have it all figured out
  - 2 - or those who have no doubts or fears
  - 1 - or who have never made any mistakes.
  - 2 - No, ... come, ***all*** of you
  - 1 - now,
  - 2 - just as you are,
  - 1 - all of you,
  - 2 - for “God is with us.”
  - 1 - Trust him.
  - 2 - Come, all ye faithful.

1

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
 O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.  
 Come and behold him, born the king of angels.

Refrain: O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
 O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

3

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
 sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;  
 glory to God all glory in the highest.....refrain

## Beginning the Gospel Story

Karen Shenk (1) &amp; Kay Kearns (2)

*(from pulpit)**(from lectern)*

- 1 - Where does the story of Jesus begin?...
- 2 - Was it in Bethlehem, when he drew his first breath as a child?
- 1 - Do we begin with Mary upon a donkey with her betrothed by her side, traveling from Nazareth to where Joseph's family originated, because some government said so?...
- 2 - Or should we start with an earlier journey of Mary – because an angel said so – to visit her relative, Elizabeth, both of them “with child,” as scripture says?...
- 1 - Does the story of Jesus begin when his earthly parents realized he was within his mother's womb, and Mary rejoiced in this new life while Joseph wrestled with the consequences of a pregnancy for which he was not responsible?...
- 2 - Is the angelic, “Fear not, the Lord is with you,” our starting place, as Gabriel announced what was to happen to a young woman who had no idea how her world would change?...
- 1 - Or do we start earlier than that with another visitation, when an old childless priest was himself overwhelmed by an angel, and rendered speechless by the news that his wife would bear a child who would one day become a voice in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord?...
- 2 - Does the story of Jesus begin, like that of Moses long before him, with the cry of God's people for deliverance?...
- 1 - Or do we start, as the gospel of Matthew does, with a genealogy that goes all the way back to Abraham?...

- 2 - Do we, like John's gospel, head to the very first words of the Bible and say that here – “in the beginning” – was the “Word” that would one day become flesh and dwell among us?...
- 1 - Where does the story of Jesus begin?...
- 2 - Perhaps what matters most is that this Word be spoken again here and now, as if for the first time.
- 1 - Allow God's joy and peace and grace to fill you this evening as you listen.
- 2 - Let it begin ... with you.

Hymn (vs. 1, 2) “Oh, how joyfully” 209

1.  
Oh, how joyfully, oh, how hopefully,  
waits the earth on Christmas eve!  
Love comes healing, God revealing.  
Friends, be joyful and believe!

2.  
Oh, how joyfully, oh, how peacefully,  
sleeps the earth on Christmas night!  
Sins are covered, grace discovered.  
In our darkness shines the light!

Scripture Luke 2:1-7 Gary Miller  
(from lectern)

[overhead .ppt picture of bulletin cover  
for Christmas Eve –  
“To you is born... a Savior”]

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

*(During the above reading, an acolyte processes down the center aisle with a lit candlelighter. At the end of the reading, s/he quietly lights the Christ Candle in the middle of the Advent wreath, then returns to the back while we sing the carols that follow.)*

Hymn medley	“O little town of Bethlehem”	191
	“Away in a manger”	194
<i>(1<sup>st</sup> vs. of each)</i>	“Infant holy, infant lowly”	206

1.  
O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

1.  
Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,  
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

1.  
Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;  
oxen lowing, little knowing, Christ the Babe is Lord of all.  
Swift are winging, angels singing, noels ringing, tidings bringing:  
Christ the Babe is Lord of all.

## Scripture

Luke 2:8-14

Kay Kearns  
*(from lectern)*

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>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: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

## Hymn

(vs. 1, 3) "Hark! The herald angels sing"

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1

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies,  
with the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem."  
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

3

Hail, the heaven-born Prince of peace! Hail, the Sun of righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,  
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

## Scripture

Luke 2:15-20

Karen Shenk

*(from pulpit)*

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

## Duet

"Angels we have heard on high"

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(Tessa Haynes & Lydia Eze-Sankara, accompanied by Meghan Knight)

## Scripture

Matthew 2:1-12

Georgia (1) & Sarah (2) Smith

*(from pulpit)*

*(from lectern)*

1 - <sup>1</sup>In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>asking,  
2 - "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."  
1 - <sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup>and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.  
<sup>5</sup>They told him,

2 - "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:  
**<sup>6</sup>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.**"

1 - <sup>7</sup>Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying,

2 - "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."

1 - <sup>9</sup>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.

2 - <sup>10</sup>When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

1 - <sup>11</sup>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.

2 - <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

## Hymn

(vs. 1,3) "What child is this"

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1.

What child is this, who laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?

Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,

while shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;

haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.

3.

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh, come, peasant, king, to own him;  
the King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him.

Raise, raise the song on high; the virgin sings her lullaby.

Joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary.

# A Christmas Confession

Sharon Kagarise  
*(from pulpit)*

*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.

*People:*

And the splendor shone around them  
When the time had fully come.

*Leader:*

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.

*People:*

And she laid him in a manger  
When the time had fully come.

*Leader:*

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.

*People:*

And the guiding star went before them  
When the time had fully come.

*Leader:*

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.

*People:*

And they offered him their treasured gifts  
When the time had fully come.

*Leader:*

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.

*People:*

And the Word was flesh among us  
When the time had fully come.



1.

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,  
 from angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:  
 "Peace on the earth, good will to men, from Heaven's gracious King."  
 The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

2.

Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled,  
 And still their heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world.  
 Above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hovering wing,  
 and ever over its Babel sounds the blessèd angels sing.

## Invitation

Pastor Pete

*(go and light a candle off the Christ candle  
 and hold it up)*

One candle... Hardly a flame to fully light up a room. Can we read  
 by the light of just one candle? Is it enough to show where we should step  
 in the middle of the night? If need be, will it help us keep awake through  
 the twilight hours? *(pause)* Just one candle...

*(four other persons come with candles to be lit  
 and stand at the bottom of the stairs in front,  
 facing the speaker)*

But it is not only one candle... The Christmas story, as we have  
 received it, involves progressively more people whose paths are  
 illuminated by the light of Christ. And this story, as we receive it today,  
 leaves the pages of scripture and is written upon our hearts. And we shine.

*(light the candles of the four persons  
 who then face the congregation)*

A traditional candle-lighting service... Please be careful with the  
 flame you will hold. Parents, watch over little ones. As fun as a lit candle  
 may be, these are not toys. May they represent to us the fire of the Holy  
 Spirit that burns within each of us.

*(the four candlelighters then go to light the candles  
 of the congregation from the center aisle.  
 Two head halfway back and two start at the front.)*

## Candlelighting

*(guitar begins playing as candles are being lit)*

1.  
Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright  
‘round yon virgin mother and Child! Holy Infant, so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

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

3.  
Silent night, holy night! Son of God, Love’s pure light,  
radiant beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

4.  
Silent night, holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light.  
With the angels let us sing, “Alleluia” to our King,  
“Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!”

## Scripture

Matthew 5:14-16

Sara Shenk

*(from pulpit)*

<sup>14</sup>“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. <sup>15</sup>No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

## Quenching the candle, but not the light

Pastor Pete

“You are the light of the world,” Jesus said. Not the candle you hold in your hand. You! Wax and a wick only last so long, but the light of Christ in you – however bright or dim it may be at this moment in time – cannot be extinguished. Do not forget this as you blow out your candle just now. We quench the candle, but not the light. You are witnesses. Shine!

\*Song

“Unspeakable Joy”

led by Nicci & Shawn Smyth

Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth receive her King  
Let every heart prepare Him room. And heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and heaven and nature sing

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns, let all their songs employ  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains, repeat the sounding joy  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat, the sounding joy

Joy, unspeakable joy  
An overflowing well, no tongue can tell  
Joy, unspeakable joy  
Rises in my soul, never lets me go

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

Joy, unspeakable joy  
An overflowing well, no tongue can tell  
Joy, unspeakable joy  
Rises in my soul, never lets me go

\*Responsive Benediction

(back of bulletin)

Pastor Pete

Leader: Sisters and brothers, witness the scandal!

**People:** She wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger,  
because there was no place for them in the inn.

Leader: Witness God's inclusive love!

**People:** In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, and the  
glory of the Lord shone around them.

Leader: Witness revelation!

**People:** Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great  
joy for all people.

Leader: Witness salvation!

**People:** To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the  
Messiah, the Lord.

Leader: Witness praise!

**People:** Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among people.

Leader: Witness compassion!

**People:** For God gives light to those who sit in darkness, and guides our feet in the way of peace.

Leader: Go with the abundant grace of God!

**People:** We go, filled with good news of great joy!

\*Postlude

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