

Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren

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

December 24, 2012

Christmas Eve

Prelude

Welcome

The first song in our hymnal begins with these words:

What is this place where we are meeting?
Only a house, the earth its floor,
walls and a roof sheltering people,
windows for light, an open door.
Yet it becomes a body that lives
when we are gathered here,
and know our God is near.*

You are welcome to this place this evening, to join with others in this living body to celebrate the birth of the Christ child. We are blessed by your presence.

A few announcements:

First, please turn off your cell phones and other devices. Santa is busy and not trying to call, text or Twitter. Our task this hour is to be attentive to the presence of God.

Second, you are invited after this worship to join us in the fellowship hall for refreshments. It's a good time to catch up with folks you may not have seen for a while, and to share your blessings and Christmas wishes.

Third, in the fellowship hall after the service is a container to receive your Christmas offerings. These will go toward the ongoing mission of this congregation. Please be generous so that we might continue to be a vibrant community of faith.

Fourth, as there is no bulletin, all the words you need to speak or sing will be projected upon the screen. Hymn numbers will be listed at the beginning of each song, in case you need to use the hymnal, but we plan to worship primarily by candle-light this evening.

In the last 10 days, I hope we have been hugging our children a little tighter. Let's begin this service with a children's carol, "All through the night."

*by Huub Oosterhuis
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Published by OCP Publications

Song

(vs. 1,3) "All through the night"

Sleep, my child, and peace attend thee, all through the night;
Guardian angels God will send thee, all through the night.
Soft the drowsy hours are creeping, hill and vale in slumber sleeping,
God his loving vigil keeping, all through the night.

You, my God, a Babe of wonder, all through the night;
Dreams you dream cannot break from thunder, all through the night.
Children's dreams cannot be broken; life is but a lovely token.
Christmas should be softly spoken all through the night.

words by Sir Harold Boulton, 1884

Call to Worship

Lamentations 3:22-26

1 - The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
2 - his mercies never come to an end;
1 - they are new every morning;
2 - great is your faithfulness.
1 - "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."
2 - The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.
1 - It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.
2 - I wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.
1 - I wait quietly.
2 - I wait.
1 - On this night of nights we quietly wait.
2 - Some of us have been racing like crazy to get everything ready.
1 - I wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.
2 - Others of us are just so excited, we can hardly be still.
1 - I wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.
2 - Some come with heavy hearts,
1 - while others are here out of obligation.
2 - I wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.
1 - The expectations of some are way too high,
2 - whereas others have come with too low expectations.
1 - I wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.
2 - May this hour be a time to stop frantic preparation,
1 - a time to be still and know,
2 - a time for returning and rest, for quietness and trust;
1 - a time for listening intently to an old, old story,
2 - a time pregnant with possibility, full of glory and wonder.
1 - So, come all you faithful,
2 - regardless of whether "joyful and triumphant" describes you this moment,
1 - simply come and just behold!

*Hymn

(vs. 1,3) ðO come, all ye faithful

(a family comes forward from the back as we sing with a lit candle, and with it lights the 4 advent candles in the wreath, tho' not the Christ candle in the center. After doing so, they blow out the candle used to light the four, and move to the sides – so all can see the candles – and wait until after the Opening Prayer to light the Christ candle. Seek to involve all family members.)

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

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
glory to God all glory in the highest.
 O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
 O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

words by John F. Wade, 1743

*Unison Opening Prayer

Come, Child of Bethlehem,
 make your presence known to us
 and dwell in our midst as we worship.
Come, servant King,
 teach us the way of your kingdom
 and make our hearts your throne.
Come, Brother of all,
 show us the meaning of our humanity.
Go before us and lead us to God;
 bring us to the fullness of your kingdom. AMEN

Hymnal #678
by Rebecca J. Slough
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Lighting the Christ Candle

(the waiting family re-lights the candle they brought forward with them off of ne of the Advent candles, and with it lights the Christ candle in the center of the wreath. They then quietly head back to their pew)

Scripture

Micah 5:2-4

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

Hymn

(vs. 1,3,4) ðO little town of Bethlehemö

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.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of the heavens.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him still the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray,
cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today!
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell.
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!

words by Phillips Brooks, 1874

Scripture

Luke 1:26-38

1 - 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,

2 - ðGreetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.ö

1 - But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her,

2 - ðDo 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.ö

1 - Mary said to the angel,

2 - "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

1 - The angel said to her,

2 - "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."

1 - Then Mary said,

2 - "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

1 - Then the angel departed from her.

Song

"Let it be"

When I find myself in times of trouble, mother Mary comes to me,
speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

And in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me,
speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be.
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.

And when the broken hearted people living in the world agree,
there will be an answer, let it be.

For though they may be parted there is still a chance that they will see,
there will be an answer, let it be.

Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be.
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.

And when the night is cloudy, there is still a light, that shines on me,
shine until tomorrow, let it be.

I wake up to the sound of music, mother Mary comes to me,
speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be.
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.

by John Lennon and Paul McCartney
Copyright ©1969 EMI Records

Scripture

Isaiah 9:2-7

1 - The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
2 - those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined.
1 - You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy;
2 - they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.
1 - For the yoke of their burden,
2 - and the bar across their shoulders,
1 - the rod of their oppressor,
2 - you have broken as on the day of Midian.
1 - For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood
2 - shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
1 - For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
2 - authority rests upon his shoulders;
1 - and he is named
2 - Wonderful Counselor,
1 - Mighty God,
2 - Everlasting Father,
1 - Prince of Peace.
2 - His authority shall grow continually,
1 - and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.
2 - He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness
1 - from this time onward and forevermore.
2 - The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Hymn

(vs. 1-2) "What child is this"

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!

Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mary!

by William C. Dix, 1865

Scripture

Luke 2:1-7

- 1 - In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.
2 - This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.
1 - All went to their own towns to be registered.
2 - Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea,
1 - to the city of David called Bethlehem,
2 - because he was descended from the house and family of David.
1 - He went to be registered with Mary,
2 - to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.
1 - While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.
2 - And she gave birth to her firstborn son
1 - and wrapped him in bands of cloth,
2 - and laid him in a manger,
1 - because there was no place for them in the inn.

Hymn

ōAway in a mangerö

Away in a manger, no crib for a 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.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

Author unknown

Scripture

Galatians 4:4-7

- 1 - But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son,
2 - born of a woman, born under the law,
1 - in order to redeem those who were under the law,
2 - so that we might receive adoption as children.

- 1 - And because you are children,
 2 - God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,
 1 - crying, ðAbba! Father!ö
 2 - So you are no longer a slave
 1 - but a child, and if a child
 2 - then also an heir, through God.

Quartet

ðInfant holy, infant lowlyö

Infant holy, infant lowly, for His bed a cattle stall;
 Oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
 Swiftly winging angels singing, bells are ringing, tidings bring-ing:
 Christ the Babe is Lord of all, Christ the Babe is Lord of all.

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new,
 Saw the glory, heard the story - tidings of a gospel true.
 Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow:
 Christ the Babe was born for you, Christ the Babe was born for you!

Polish carol
 translated by Edith M.G. Reed, 1925

Scripture

Luke 2:8-20

- 1 - 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,
 2 - ðDo not be afraid; for seeô 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.ö
 1 - And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
 2 - ðGlory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!ö
 1 - When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,
 2 - ðLet us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.ö
 1 - So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.
 2 - 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.
 1 - But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.
 2 - The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Hymn

ōHark! The herald angels singō

Choir only (processing):

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!"

All:

Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come, offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity;
pleased with us in flesh to dwell; Jesus, our Immanuel!
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

All:

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!"

by Charles Wesley, 1739

Hymn

(vs. 1,3,4) ōAngels we have heard on highō

Choir:

Angels we have heard on high, singing sweetly through the night,
and the mountains in reply echoing their brave delight.

All: Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo,

Congregation:

Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing.
Come, adore on bended knee Christ, the Lord, the newborn king.

All: Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo,

Choir:

See him in a manger laid whom the angels praise above.
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while we raise our hearts in love.

All: Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo,

author unknown
traditional French carol

Hymn

(vs. 1, 5) ðIt came upon the midnight clearö

It came upon a 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 all from heaven's gracious king."
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophet bards foretold,
when with the ever circling years comes round the age of gold,
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.

by Edmund H. Sears, 1849

Anthem

öWho would send a baby?ö

Who would send a baby to heal a world in pain?
Who would send a baby, a tiny child?
When the world is crying for the Promised One,
Who would send His Only Son?

Who would send a baby to light our world with light?
Who would send a baby, a tiny child?
When the world is hoping for the Promised One,
Who would send His Only Son?

Who would choose a manger to cradle the King?
Who would send angels to sing?
Who would hang a star in the sky above
To shine on the gift of His infinite love?

Who would send a baby to bless the world with peace?
Who would send a baby, a tiny child?
When the world is yearning for the Promised One,
Who would send a baby, who would send a baby?
Who would send His Only Begotten Son?

by Mary Kay Beall
©1988 Somerset Press

Video

öNativity Storyö

<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/10857/Nativity-Story>
(choir returns to their families)

Scripture John 1:1-5

- 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.

a few words on the Word

It is said that in the darkness of a mother's womb, a child-to-be can hear. Powerful is the voice of the one who bears us and brings us to birth. That voice and, after we come into the world as flesh and blood, the face of a mother ó these (her words and her face) create a mighty bond which lasts a lifetime.

Imagine the first moments of the life of Jesus. Is it any wonder that Mary figures so prominently in the story as we have received it? Later on in John's gospel, this mother's words are enough to get her grown son to step forth into his first recorded miracle, the changing of water into wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Such words are, indeed, powerful, whether spoken by a mother, or by the One who gave birth to all things in the beginning. *“Let there be light,”* God said in creating the earth, and this word made it so. *“And behold, it was very good.”*

On this night of nights, we remember when Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We celebrate the birth of the One we call *“Messiah”* or *“Christ,”* who entered this world as all children do. The circumstances were not ideal, but when are they ever? Yes, he grew up, as little ones do, but the point is ó he was as all children are.

And yet, this child was also God in human form. This is one of the great paradoxes of our Christian faith. Please hear the *“doxa”* in the word, *“paradox,”* for from it we derive the word *“doxology.”* We stand before a mystery which brings forth from us silence and awe. Theologians long ago struggled to explain the incarnation, their words ultimately falling short. Even today, we are little more than shepherds who hear angels sing in the night and dumbfoundedly wander in the direction of the light.

This light shines in our darkness. Like children in our mother's womb, we are preparing for birth. And when the day dawns, there will be the voice and the face our Creator! This Word made flesh who came to dwell among us long ago in human form, and who comes to us now as heaven's breath ó the Holy Spirit, this Word provides for us light and life, and leads us toward a new beginning in the light of the Kingdom. No darkness can extinguish this Light!

In a few moments, we will symbolically pass the light of Christ from one person to the next. Practically speaking, do be careful with these candles. Parents, please watch over your children. This is, after all, a flame, and fire can burn. Remember, this light shines within each one of us, and will continue to do so long after we blow out our candles! Before we sing "Silent Night" and pass along the light, would you lift up your voices with mine and join in a unison prayer?

Unison Prayer

God of grace and truth, in Jesus Christ you came among us as light shining in darkness. We confess that we have not welcomed the light, or trusted good news to be good. We have closed our eyes to glory in our midst, expecting little, and hoping for less. Forgive our doubt, and renew our hope, so that we may receive the fullness of your grace, and live in the truth of Christ the Lord.

from *Book of Common Worship*,
prepared by The Theology and Worship
Ministry Unit for the PCUSA
(Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 180.

Candle-lighting

Hymn

"Silent night, holy night"

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."

by Joseph Mohr, 1818
translated by John F. Young, 1863

Scripture

1 John 1:1-4

- 1 - We declare to you what was from the beginning,
- 2 - what we have heard,
- 1 - what we have seen with our eyes,
- 2 - what we have looked at and touched with our hands,
- 1 - concerning the word of life ô
- 2 - this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it,
- 1 - and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father
- 2 - and was revealed to us ô
- 1 - we declare to you what we have seen and heard
- 2 - so that you also may have fellowship with us;
- 1 - and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.
- 2 - We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

Benediction Song

(vs. 3-4) òGo, my childrenö

3

Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me.
Grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.
Here my Spirit's power filled you, here his tender comfort stilled you.
Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.

4

I, the Lord, will bless and keep you, and give you peace.
I, the Lord, will smile upon you, and give you peace.
I, the Lord, will be your Father, Savior, Comforter, and Brother.
Go, my children, I will keep you, and give you peace."

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Postlude