Christmas Eve
The Nativity of our Lord
24 December 2017
Myers Park Baptist Church
Charlotte, North Carolina
THE WORSHIP OF GOD
THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD - CHRISTMAS EVE
24 DECEMBER 2017
AT SIX O’CLOCK IN THE EVENING

THE COMMUNITY GATHERS BEFORE GOD

Inspired by the radical hospitality of Jesus, we welcome and affirm all people into the life of the Church regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical limitation, educational background, economic situation, or religious belief.

Gluten-free communion wafers are available in the Narthex.

THE SILENT MEDITATION

I AM making my way. Leaving everything I’ve known, for solidarity, to be with you. Can you make room? Like Mary, open your womb; give me refuge, make living space within. . . .

It is believed that it takes a divine act, an angelic messenger or miracle, an unwinding string of unbelievable-yet-real circumstances to convince and inspire real world change.

True, and yet willing souls also make a difference. People courageous enough to resist death dealing, starve fear, and consecrate space for holiness: life begetting life, new breath, fresh eyes, hope!

This kind of resistance calls you with me to offer dignity, house the refugee, grace the infringed-the exiled-the homeless-the stranger. To become the inn keeper allowing just one more family without reservation his last bit of room. Just enough for me. Light, embodied. . . .

I AM, after all, forever the last one of you. Lead one another by my way, leaving everything you’ve known for solidarity. To be with me. I am expecting you.

Make room, beloved. There is more than enough.

- Expect Me? by Kelly Ann Hall

THE MUSIC OF CHRISTMAS (5:30 p.m.)
Carols for Flute, Violin and Organ
Mary Ann Archer, flute; Anna Boyle, violin

THE CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The Lord be with you.
People: And also with you.

At this time, everyone is invited to sign the friendship register found at the end of each pew. We especially welcome our guests this evening and ask that you include your contact information. If you have not yet done so, please silence your cell phone.

*THE PROCESSION AND OPENING OF THE BIBLE
“Joy to the world! The Lord is come”

*THE COLLECT
Leader: Let us pray.
People: O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of true light: grant that this same light enkindled in our hearts may shine forth in our lives. Amen.

*Please stand in body or in spirit.
*The Lighting of the Christ Candle*

Leader: A trumpet blares through the silent night!
A new song heralds the coming light!

People: Let us sing the new song,
let us turn to the light,
let us build a new earth,
let us celebrate new life!

Leader: Let the sea’s deep rumble make the sky tremble!
Let the field’s high chanting make the clouds dance!

All: Let us sing the new song,
let us turn to the light,
let us build a new earth,
let us celebrate new life!

(Lighting the Christ Candle.)

People: (singing)

Angels, from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o’er all the earth;
ye who sang creation’s story,
now proclaim Messiah’s birth:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn King!

The Kyrie Eleison *(Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy.)*

The Invitation to Silent Confession

The Prayer of Confession

God of Wonder,
We come into your presence confessing
we have lost sight of the wonder of creation.
We confess that on this eve when we celebrate the birth of Jesus,
the frantic paces of our lives send us places far from thoughts
of new life and new hope in the form of a child.
We confess that we have become hardened
from the conflict we have experienced.
God of Grace, forgive our foolish ways.
Rekindle our faith. Renew our lives.
Reveal to us the possibilities of new beginnings.
Let the wonder and awe of this season turn our worlds upside down.
Amen.

The Assurance of Pardon
The Gloria in Excelsis Deo

Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

The Passing of the Peace

Ancient words of greeting and forgiveness may be used when Passing the Peace to those around you, saying either: “The peace of God be with you” or “The peace of Christ be with you.” The response may be: “And also with you.”

The Word of God Is Proclaimed and Heard

The Solo

“Rejoice Greatly, O Daughter of Zion”

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem:

behold, thy King cometh unto thee:
he is the righteous Savior, and he shall speak peace unto the heathen.

Charlotte Judge, soprano

The Gospel Lesson

Luke 2:1-20 (NRSV)

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.

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 God 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.

Leader: For the Word of God in scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us.

People: Thanks be to God.

The Hymn

“O little town of Bethlehem”

The Christmas Meditation

“The Reverend W. Benjamin Boswell

“Welcoming God the Stranger”

Number 116

St. Louis
THE CONGREGATION Responds to God’s Word

The Church at Prayer

The Christmas Offering

The offering will benefit the MPBC Sunshine Fund (The Church Benevolence Fund).

The Anthem

“The Chancel Choir

“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”

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.

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.

The Chancel Choir

Polish Carol, arr. Mack Wilberg

The Sharing of the Bread and Cup

All are welcome at this Table. It is open to all who seek to follow Jesus. There are no requirements of creed, denominational affiliation or age. Come, bring all the faith you have to this table of grace.

You are invited to come forward to receive Communion as indicated by greeters. Two stations will serve the outer two aisles; two central stations will serve the center aisle; and one station in the balcony will serve the balcony. Before returning to your seat, please deposit empty juice cups in one of the baskets. If you prefer to receive Communion at your seat, please indicate by raising your hand so a deacon may serve you. Gluten-free communion wafers are available in the Narthex.

The Invitation to the Table

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord’s Prayer

Our God, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

The Words of Institution

The Sharing of the Bread and Cup

The Music at Communion

The Prayer after Communion

We give you thanks, O God, that you have come to us through Jesus the Christ, both in the midst of time and history, and in the timeless presence of Christ’s spirit as we receive the gifts of bread and wine. Send us out into the world rejoicing, enabled to share your love with all people we meet; through the grace of Jesus the Christ. Amen.
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. You 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. For 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. For all the boots of the trampling warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For 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. His 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 onward and forevermore.

**THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES**

*THE CAROL WITH LIGHTS*

“Silent night, holy night!”

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.

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.

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.

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.

**THE CHRISTMAS BENEDICTION**

The congregation extinguishes their candles.
The greeters will receive your candles as you leave.

**THE POSTLUDE**

“Rejoice, Beloved Christians, BWV 734”

The Nativity Tableau will begin shortly after the conclusion of this service.  
The Holy Family is portrayed by Tucker and Jennifer Pearsall.  
Shepherds and Magi will be portrayed by Adam Cranford, Susan Hill-Gilbert,  
Josh Hull, Ian Hull, Austin Haenni, and Kathryn Haenni.
Leading worship this evening with The Reverend W. Benjamin Boswell, Senior Minister, are The Reverend Joseph D. Aldrich, Associate Minister, The Reverend Chrissy Tatum Williamson, Associate Minister, The Reverend Leigh Anne Hagerman, Church Administrator, The Reverend Carrie Veal, Minister of Families and Community Life, Allen Davis, Director of Youth Ministry, and Amy Jones, Member of the Congregation.

The Chancel Choir leads worship through music with Frances L. Morrison, Minister of Music, Charlotte C. Judge, Associate Director of Music, John Richardson, Organist, Mary Ann Archer, Flutist and Anna Boyle, Violinist.

The acolytes are members of the Myers Park Baptist Church Youth Ministry.

The sound technician is Eric Roberts. The webcast technician is John Bambach.

The poinsettias on the altar are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Mr. and Mrs. W. Frank Dowd and Mr. Roddey Dowd, Sr., by the Frank Dowd, Jr. family and Mrs. Roddey Dowd, Sr. and family; also in loving memory of Sally Carson Dowd by Frank Dowd, Jr. and family.

The cover artwork is *Word Made Flesh* by Donald Jackson, from *The Illuminated St. John’s Bible.*

The Gospel of John begins with the verse, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (1:1) The reference to the Beginning hearkens back to Genesis and the Earth’s formation, and artist Donald Jackson incorporates the Genesis story by having the central figure of Christ step from the dark unformed universe toward the bright organized world. In *The Art of The Saint John’s Bible*, Susan Sink develops this idea:

The image of Christ seems to be stepping from the darkness which recalls the chaos and nothingness of the creation story and moves toward light and order. In fact, the texture behind Christ’s head is inspired by an image taken from the Hubble Space Telescope and reflects the cosmic character of the event.

To the left, a keyhole recalls the tradition of locked and hinged manuscripts securing, protecting, and holding the “key” to the Word of God. It might also make you think of standing at the door and knocking, of locked diaries, and of secret prayers of the heart.

Notice also the stenciled crosses which refer to the Transfiguration illumination, and the gold filigree which throughout the Bible refers to the presence of the divine.¹

¹ https://sites.up.edu/library/the-word-made-flesh/
OUR COVENANT

We, the members of the Myers Park Baptist Church, are a people on a journey of faith. By God’s grace we are experiencing God’s love through Jesus Christ and in the community of the faithful. We are discovering in this experience our freedom to become new creatures and our responsibility to be faithful stewards of our lives and of this world.

We will be open to all new light, strengthened by God and each other in our faith. We will sustain a critical examination of Scripture, belief and ritual as interpreters of God’s active presence in the world. We will accept controversy as a reality of life together and an opportunity for growth toward maturity. We covenant to be a community of God’s new creation and affirm that we are open to all and closed to none.

We covenant to nurture this Church as a community of faith and as an instrument for reconciliation in this world: by worship, by Christian education, by the dedication of our personal and material resources and by all the other ways we express the significance of our lives with God and one another.

We covenant together to be priests celebrating God’s presence in community and in the world, believing we are participants in God’s kingdom on earth.

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MYERS PARK
BAPTIST CHURCH

OPEN TO ALL

1900 QUEENS ROAD
CHARLOTTE, NC 28207-2582

704.334.7232
WWW.MYERSPARKBAPTIST.ORG

MINISTERS

As priests to one another, all members of the congregation are ministers. Some are called out for particular places of service:

THE REVEREND W. BENJAMIN BOSWELL, Senior Minister
FRANCES L. MORRISON, Minister of Music
THE REVEREND JOSEPH D. ALDRICH, Associate Minister
THE REVEREND CHRISSY TATUM WILLIAMSON, Associate Minister
THE REVEREND LEIGH ANNE HAGERMAN, Church Administrator
THE REVEREND CARRIE VEAL, Minister of Children and Community Life
JOHN RICHARDSON, Organist
CHARLOTTE JUDGE, Associate Director of Music
ALLEN DAVIS, Director of Youth Ministry
JENNY YOPP, Director of the Cornwell Center
BELINDA GEUSS, Director of Through-The-Week School

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