

# Christmas Eve Service

December 24, 2020

## Welcome

A joyous welcome in the name of Jesus the dawn of redeeming grace who will make all of our pure hopes reality. Wherever you are, God is with you, you are surrounded by the cloud of witnesses, everyone in heaven, your resurrected family and friends are cheering for you, the Holy Spirit unites us all.

## Call to Worship

Roderick: God is with us

**Pastor James: God is one of us**

Roderick: The angels proclaimed it!

**Pastor James: The shepherds saw it!**

Roderick: Mary treasured it!

**Pastor James: Wise people discovered it!**

Roderick: The King of kings, Lord of lords, the very God of very God, has been born in Bethlehem

**Pastor James: Let us join the celebration!**

**Carol:** “O Come All Ye Faithful”

## Relighting Advent Candles

The York Family

**Christ Candle:** The Christ candle is lit because Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. Jesus promised to never leave or forsake us. In time Jesus will make all Christmas wishes come true and last for eternity.

**Peace Candle:** We relight the candle of peace which could also be called the candle of grace and forgiveness. God forgives, heals and retells our stories. Whatever you have done, whatever you have failed to do, whoever you are, whoever you wish you were but are not: You are accepted, you are welcomed. You belong. You are washed clean, you are raised up. You are forgiven, you are set free. In the love of Jesus Christ, you are loved forever. God knows all. God knows you completely and God loves you eternally. God cares for you. God is comforting you. Your complete and total forgiveness creates peace within, enabling you to fully love yourself, which enables us to forgive each other, so we can love each other, ushering in peace on earth. Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

**Hope Candle:** We relight the candle of hope proclaiming that Jesus the light shines in the darkness and the darkness will never overcome the light. Relax, let hope sink into your being to rejuvenate you. On the surface the world is still in chaos, yet under the surface everything has changed and will be glorious. Hope flows from God. It is not your job to muster up a Christmas spirit. God does it for you. Let go. Imagine Jesus enveloping you in hope that is drawing you into an ever-increasing life of love and joy.

**Love Candle:** We relight the candle of Love that endures forever. Absolutely nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Every instance of love you received and share is eternal. We know love because God first loved us. We know God is with us because we all have experienced love. God is love. Those who abide in love, abide in God and God abides in them. For God so loves the world that God sent Jesus for you. Jesus is the author of love.

**Joy Candle** We relight the candle of joy. God is joy. Jesus is with you filling you with God's joy that creates and redeems, God's joy that delights in you, God's joy that is drawing the cosmos together in unity, God's joy that will cause us to dance, sing and radiate the glory of God. Let us receive again God's joy that fulfills all your pure desires even better than your grandest dreams, that revives all your lost loves even lovelier than you knew, that completes you and makes you whole, a glorious, eternal member of God's family, who belongs to the kingdom of God. Jesus is the endless source of joy.

**Handbell Carol:** “Still, Still, Still”

## Christmas Litany

Roderick: Glory to you, almighty God, for you sent Jesus to fill us with joy and give us abundant life forever!

**Pastor James: Glory to you, Jesus, for you became flesh, live among us and welcome us as your siblings.**

Roderick: Glory to you, Holy Spirit, for you fill our lives with life, peace, joy and love.

**Pastor James: Glory to you, Triune God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer now and forever.**

Roderick: God graciously offers salvation and eternal life to everyone. Alleluia! Shout to the Lord, all the earth. Alleluia!

**Pastor James: O Christ, splendor of God's eternal glory, the mighty Word, sustaining the universe: renew our lives by your presence.**

Roderick: O Christ, born into the world in the fullness of time for the liberation of all creation: release all into your promised freedom.

**Pastor James: O Christ, united with the Creator and Sustainer before all time, born in a stable at Bethlehem: may we embody your redeeming love.**

Roderick: O Christ, truly God and truly human, born to us to fulfill our pure desires.

**Pastor James: O Christ, child of wonder, inspire us to joyfully play.**

Roderick: O Christ, Prince of Peace, help us live in harmony with everyone.

**Pastor James: The peace of God be with you all.**

Roderick: And also with you.

## Isaiah 9:6

The prophet Isaiah foretold the birth of Jesus. **“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.”** As Wonderful Counselor Jesus guides us with wisdom. As Mighty God Jesus expresses the power of God’s loving presence. As Everlasting Father Jesus is steadfast and ever sure to provide us with every need and blessing for eternity. As Prince of Peace Jesus will reconcile every relationship and make every relationship a bond of magnificent harmony. The zeal of our Triune God will do this.

**Carol:** “What Child is This”

## Intro to John 1:1-14; Luke 2:1-20

The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of Jesus’ coming reign to be fully manifest. The wounded world aches with longing for the healing Jesus brings. Jesus comes revealing God’s salvation plan for us and the cosmos. Faith moves us to look beyond our current world for the fulfillment of our deepest desires and hopes. “Christmas is a fest of the senses! It is a celebration of our ability to see, know, taste and touch the glory of God.”

We are celebrating that the Word, that is Jesus, did indeed become flesh; pitched a tent among us; moved into our neighborhood. God threw love-light into a fallen, broken world to save and fix all. Jesus came to feel what we feel, live as we live. God has a passionate desire to be with each person, to kindle their love-light into a blaze. Jesus came for you. God came to throw love-light into your messy, sometimes scary world so you can perceive God’s loving, illuminating presence. Jesus came to restore you to your true self, glorious inside and out. Jesus is the dawn of redeeming grace. Hear the gospel accounts of Christmas, heaven reaching to you, the birth of Jesus.

## A reading from the Gospels of John and Luke

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Jesus was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Jesus, and without Jesus not one thing came into being. What has come into being in Jesus was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. 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. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. Jesus was in the world, and the world came into being through Jesus; yet the world did not know Jesus. He came to what was his own, and his own**

people did not accept Jesus. But to all who received Jesus, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of people, but of God. 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. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. From Jesus fullness we all receive, grace upon grace. 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.

**Choral Anthem:** "Going to Bethlehem"

### **Romans 15:13 NLT**

The Apostle Paul lived an earthly life laden with disasters, setbacks, persecution, pain and suffering. Paul prayed for himself, and prays for all people, to have hope.

**Romans 15:13 NLT "I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in God. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit."**

Jesus will fulfill all the pure hopes and dreams of all the years. God is transforming you. Jesus came to live with us, in human flesh, to experience our longings so God can fulfill every pure longing. Jesus knows exactly what you are going through. Jesus will make all of your pure hopes reality. On earth we live in "not yet" time. The fulfillment of all our pure hopes is "not yet" reality. In this "not yet" time hope nourishes life. Hope enables us to keep going, to keep serving, keep loving, even when things are getting worse, for hope knows that every act of love makes an eternal difference. Hope glimpses the glory that is coming. Hope imagines the joy of having every one of your pure dreams fulfilled. Hope pulls us through monotony, boredom and the mundane to abundant life. Hope keeps even the most damaged relationships alive until God makes every relationship harmonious. Hope sustains us through every setback, illness, crisis and hurt until God heals us. When we feel hopeless, Hope is caring for us and transform us. Abundant life is coming. I join the Apostle Paul in praying for you and everyone that God the source of hope will fill you completely with joy and peace, then you will overflow with confident hope.

**Handbell Carol:** "Angels We Have Heard on High"

### **Prayers of People and The Lord's Prayer**

#### **Affirmation of Faith**

We believe in the living God, the God of all people, who creates life and sustains the cosmos. We believe in Jesus, the Light of the world, revealer of God, model for all humanity, the greatest gift of love. We believe in the Holy Spirit, who inspires us to creative, abundant living and empowers us to be persons of hospitality, compassion, peace, grace, joyfulness and love. We believe in the Triune God, the Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, who invigorates and inspires us, forgives and saves us, heals and completes us, renews and resurrects us forever and ever Amen.

**Praise Carol:** "The First Noel"

### **Titus 2:11 & 13**

Titus proclaims "For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. We look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed."

**Carol:**

“Silent Night”

**Matthew 5:14a & 16**

Jesus loves pure light, with radiant beams from Jesus compassionate face, has already bathed the world in a brilliant glow. Jesus is the dawn of redeeming grace. Jesus is the source of life. Jesus created you in the image of God, through the Holy Spirit you have the light, life, love, creativity, joy, peace and grace of God. Jesus said. **Matthew 5:14a & 16 “You are the light of the world. Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise God.”**

The Holy Spirit connects you with God and all people. Your creativity is adding wonder to the cosmos. Your love and joy will be savored by all for eternity. Your uniqueness reveals a facet of God that only you can reveal. Your grace is forgiving, comforting and inspiring others. You are the light of the world. We are the light of the world. You are a beloved eternal member of God’s family. Jesus is shaping you into who you are created to be, a person able to love extravagantly and receiving love completely, a person who will enjoy all their pure hopes, a person able to be filled with all the joys of the cosmos. Christmas is the dawn of redeeming grace for everyone.

**Carol**

“Joy to the World”

**Blessing**

Pastor James: May Almighty God, who sent his Son to take our nature upon him, fill you with holy, joyful abundant life.

**Roderick: May God, who sent God’s angels to proclaim the glad news of the Savior’s birth, enable you to proclaim God’s grace for everyone.**

Pastor James: May God, who in the Word made flesh joined heaven to earth and earth to heaven, fill you with the glory of the Kingdom of God

**Roderick: And the blessing of God, the Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer be upon you and remain with you forever.**

Pastor James: The blessings of God warm you like the sun, the grace of Christ fall upon you like gentle snow, and the joy of the Holy Spirit lift you to new heights like an eagle soaring. Amen