

**Christmas Eve**  
**December 24, 2020**  
**First Presbyterian Church, Sterling IL**

**WELCOME**

**PRELUDE**

**THRESHOLD MOMENT**

Throughout this Advent season as we gathered in spirit, our theme has been “Home for Christmas: Letters and Cards.” Tonight as we worship, we receive once again the good tidings of great joy that come to us in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, God’s love letter to the world. Tonight we will hear and experience, in scripture, in song, in prayer, and at the Lord’s table, the message of God’s overwhelming love for all humankind, as we hear the Christmas story and call to mind the hope, the promise, and the joy we have in Christ, who makes us heirs in the family of God that provides for us a legacy of grace and life eternal.

Our first reading comes from the ancient prophecy in the book of Isaiah: God’s promise of a Messiah, who will be the light of the world and the salvation of all humankind. The prophet Isaiah wrote these words to God’s people:

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 tramping 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.

Now come, faithful people. Come let us adore him!

### SONG

*O Come, All Ye Faithful*

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!

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,  
Born this happy morning,  
Jesus to Thee be all glory given;  
Word of the Father,  
Now in flesh appearing!

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!

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

All of heaven and nature sings in joy tonight! Let us join in the song.

### **SONG**

*Joy to the World*

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 us our songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains

Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

### **CALL TO CONFESSION**

Friends, one of the most persistent messages we have in scripture is the love and mercy of God. Through the covenant, the prophets, the judges and kings, and most of all through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we are assured of God's grace. Trusting in that message, let us sing together our prayer of confession.

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

*Joy to the World*

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

*Silence is kept*

### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Leader: Rejoice and be glad, people of God. God's grace is for all and forever. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

### **RESPONSE**

*Joy to the World*

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.

Leader: Christ is the Prince of Peace. Because of Christ, we have peace with God, and peace with one another.

### **SONG**

*Dona Nobis Pacem*

Dona nobis  
Pacem, pacem  
Dona nobis pacem.  
(repeat 2x)

## PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

### CHILDREN'S TIME

#### ANTHEM

Hope Was Born This Night

### CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

#### GOSPEL READINGS

*Jesus is Born in Bethlehem*                      *Luke 2: 1-7*

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

#### SONG

*Away in a Manger*

Away in a manger,  
no crib for His bed,  
The little Lord Jesus  
laid down His sweet head.

The stars in the sky  
looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus,  
asleep on the hay.

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.

*The Angel Appears to the Shepherds Luke 2: 8-14*

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

## SONG

*Angels We Have Heard on High*  
Angels we have heard on high,  
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply  
Echoing their joyous strain.

Gloria in excelsis Deo;  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be  
Which inspire your heavenly song?

Gloria in excelsis Deo;  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

*The Shepherds Go and Tell What They Have Seen Luke 2: 15-20*

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

## SONG

*Hark the Herald Angels Sing*

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 angelic host proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

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 God-head see;  
Hail the incarnate Deity,  
Please in flesh with us to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

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 any die,  
Born to raise us from the earth,  
Born to give us second birth.

Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

## **RESPONDING TO THE WORD**

### **THE OFFERING**

If you are able, please continue to send in your offering and pledge. If you are enrolled in electronic funds transfer, there is no need to do anything different. If you would like to give online using Paypal, click this link: [bit.ly/FPCsterling](https://bit.ly/FPCsterling)

### **PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

God of hope and promise, God of joy, through Jesus you have adopted us into your family and given us an inheritance that is beyond all measure. Receive these, our gifts, given in gratitude and love. Amen.

## THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

### INVITATION

From north and south, from east and west, O faithful people, come,  
to share the feast that Christ prepares, where heaven and earth are one.  
Come, all who hunger, all who thirst; with confidence, draw near,  
for Jesus Christ, the bread of life is truly present here.

### WORDS OF INSTITUTION

#### GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Leader: We lift our hearts, O Lord our God, with thanks and praise to you.  
Creator of the universe, your love makes all things new.

**People: "Most holy, holy, holy Lord!" the heavenly choirs proclaim.  
How blessed is the one who comes in your exalted name.**

Leader: We thank you for your Word made flesh, our Savior, Jesus Christ,  
whose dying has destroyed our death, whose rising gives us life.

**People: With grateful hearts we offer you this sacrifice of praise,  
remembering your faithfulness, rejoicing in your grace.**

Leader: Pour out your Spirit now, to bless these gifts of bread and wine,  
and let them be a feast for us, your covenant seal and sign.

**People: As Christ is present in this place so may we one day be  
united at your table, Lord, for all eternity.**

**People: AMEN.**

Leader: And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

### BREAKING OF THE BREAD

### DISTRIBUTION OF THE BREAD AND CUP

## **PRAYER AFTER THE SUPPER**

Loving God, we thank you that you have fed us in this sacrament, united us with Christ, and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in your eternal realm. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **WE GO FORTH TO LOVE AND SERVE**

## **LIGHTING THE CANDLES**

### **SONG**

*Silent 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!  
Song 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!

## **BENEDICTION**