

THE ORDER *of* WORSHIP



"The Nativity" 1523, oil on panel by Lorenzo Lotto (ca. 1480 – 1556); National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.)

✠ CHRISTMAS EVE ✠

THE NATIVITY *of* OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

December 24, 2020 | 4.30 p.m.

FIRST UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH

Salisbury, North Carolina

ESTABLISHED 1783



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP & CANDLELIGHT COMMUNION

THURSDAY, 24 December, *Anno Domini* 2020

half-past four in the afternoon | The Sanctuary

✠ denotes the People standing, in body or spirit, as able.

The People's responses are printed in **bold**.



SILENT PRAYER of PREPARATION for WORSHIP

O Almighty God, by the birth of Your Holy Child Jesus, You gave us a great light to dawn on our darkness. Grant that in His Light we may see light. Bestow upon us that most excellent Christmas gift of love to all people, so that the likeness of Your Son may be formed in us, and that we may have the ever-brightening hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

GREETING

Pastor Mark Conforti

PRELUDE

A Joyful Peal

Peals of Praise Handbell Ensemble

Michael Bedford

✠ CALL to WORSHIP (*responsively*)

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.

**Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom He favors!**

✠ LIGHTING of THE ADVENT WREATH

We light the Christ candle, for in Christ,
*"The people who have 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."* (Isaiah 9.2-3a)

EMMANUEL: The Christ Candle

(you are invited to light a candle in your home)

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.

Glo ——— ria, in excelsis Deo! Glo ——— ria, in excelsis Deo! [Latin: "Glory to God in the highest!"]

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heavenly song?
Glo ——— ria, in excelsis Deo! Glo ——— ria, in excelsis Deo!

3. Come to Bethlehem and see Christ whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Glo ——— ria, in excelsis Deo! Glo ——— ria, in excelsis Deo!

4. See Him in a manger laid, whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while our hearts in love we raise.
Glo ——— ria, in excelsis Deo! Glo ——— ria, in excelsis Deo!

*Words: Traditional French Carol; trans. Crown of Jesus, 1862, alt. (Luke 2.6-20).
Music: French Carol melody; arr. Edward Shippen Barnes, 1937; harm. Austin C. Lovelace, 1964.*

PRAYER *for* ILLUMINATION (*in unison*)

Joe Vaughn

We would make room for You this night of all nights, dear Lord:
room in our minds and hearts;
room also in our life together.

Let Your Word be born in us anew so that,
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
Your splendor shines in us and through us.
In Jesus' Name we pray. *Amen.*

²The people who walked in darkness
 have seen a great light;
 those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
 on them light has shined.

³You 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.

⁴For 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.

⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors
 and all the garments rolled in blood
 shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶For 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.

⁷His 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 zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

The Choir introduces the Refrain (℞) first, then All repeat:

Let the heav'ns re - joice, and the earth be glad!

¹ O sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.

² Sing to the LORD, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.

³ Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples.

⁴ For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.

⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.

⁶ Honor and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. ℞

⁷ Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

⁸ Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts.

⁹ Worship the LORD in holy splendor;
tremble before him, all the earth. ℞

¹⁰ Say among the nations, "The LORD is king!
The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved.
He will judge the peoples with equity."

¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

¹² let the field exult, and everything in it.

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy

¹³ before the LORD; for he is coming,
for he is coming to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with his truth. ℞

² 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. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ 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. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ 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.

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

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

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

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God!

- O** God, we long for better days when we can be together,
to celebrate Your love and grace in Jesus Christ our Savior.
We long for “*Silent Night*” in crowded pews by candlelight.
May we who stay at home now find Your Christmas blessing.
2. We long to come and “*Deck the Halls*” this year – like many others.
Yet all around we hear the calls of countless, hurting neighbors.
This year, in quiet ways, we’ll pray, and serve, and fill our days.
May we who stay at home now find Your Christmas blessing.
3. We’ll still, with “*Christian Friends, Rejoice*,” by phone, or by our Zooming.
We’ll ponder here: “*What Child is This?*” – and seek “*A Rose, E’er Blooming*.”
We’ll love, and serve, and give; we’ll live as Christ taught us to live.
May we who stay at home now find Your Christmas blessing.
4. We long to feast and celebrate with family, friends, and neighbors.
Yet this can be our gift – to wait, until the times are better.
“*Still, Still*,” You give us joy – a love that death cannot destroy.
May we who stay at home now find Your Christmas blessing.

Words: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, © 2020.

Music: Traditional English ballad, XVI Century; arr. Christmas Carols New and Old, 1871.

OFFERING

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ANTHEM

Jesus Christ, the Apple Tree

Christmas Choir
arr. Simon Andrews

*The tree of life my soul hath seen, laden with fruit and always green:
The trees of nature fruitless be compared with Christ the Apple Tree.*

*His beauty doth all things excel: by faith I know, but ne’er can tell
The glory which I now can see in Jesus Christ the Apple Tree.*

*For happiness I long have sought, and pleasure dearly I have bought:
I missed of all; but now I see ’tis found in Christ the Apple Tree.*

*This fruit doth make my soul to thrive, it keeps my dying faith alive;
Which makes my soul in haste to be with Jesus Christ the apple tree. Amen.*

Words: attr. Rev. Richard Hutchins, 1761; Joshua Smith, 1784.

Music: Thomas Tallis (ca. 1561).

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PASTORAL PRAYER of INTERCESSION and THANKSGIVING

concluding with THE LORD'S PRAYER (in unison)

Our Father, 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.*

✠ CHRISTMAS BENEDICTION

The People bow their heads and extend their hands to receive the blessing:

Let the Love that shaped heaven and earth
dwell within us this Christmas.

Let the Love that created humanity
dwell within us this Christmas.

Let the Love that overcomes suffering and hatred
dwell within us this Christmas.

Let the Love that causes us to rejoice with loved ones
dwell within us this Christmas.

Let the Love that forgives and renews
dwell within us this Christmas.

Let the Love that brings reconciliation after separation
dwell within us this Christmas.

Let the Love that brings the blessing of peace
dwell within us this Christmas.

And may we share that peace
with all people near and far. *Amen.*

✠ SHARING the LIGHT of CHRIST

As the Light is distributed, please light your candle off the upright lit candle to avoid dripping wax.

The first stanza is sung in German as the light is distributed, then All sing stanza 2, in English:

Jen Fogt and Joshua Starnes, *duet*
Kevin Lundy, *guitar*

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht! Alles schläft, einsam wacht
Nur das traute hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh! Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!

[*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.**

As the last stanza is sung, please raise your candle to signify that Jesus Christ our Lord is indeed the Light of the world.

**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!**

*Words: Joseph Mohr, 1818, alt.; sts. 1-3 trans. John F. Young; st. 4 trans. Anonymous.
Music: Franz Gruber, 1818.*

✠ COMMISSION and DISMISSAL

Please keep your candle raised for the commission.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hid.

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.

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. (Matthew 5.14-16)

Amen.

Let us go forth in peace and joy in the Name of Christ,
to make and nurture Christian disciples
through the presence and power of God.

Thanks be to God! Alleluia!

The People extinguish their candles.

✠ DEPARTURE into THE MISSION FIELD





THOSE SERVING IN WORSHIP

(listed alphabetically)

THE REVEREND DR. MARK CONFORTI	<i>Senior Pastor</i>
Ms. JEN FOGT	<i>Video Producer</i>
THE REVEREND STACEY LUNDY	<i>Associate Pastor of Discipleship & Pastoral Care</i>
MR. JOSHUA W. STARNES	<i>Director of Music & Organist</i>
MR. JOE VAUGHN	<i>Lector</i>

PEALS OF PRAISE HANDBELL ENSEMBLE

Mrs. Susan Cooley
Mrs. Kathy DeFalco
Ms. Jen Fogt
Mrs. Judy Fowler
Mrs. Deneen Jones
Mrs. Gloria Matthews
Mrs. Kris Mueller
The Rev^d Richard Paschall
Mrs. Nancy Schoch
Ms. Carole Young

CHRISTMAS CHOIR

Mrs. Carol Bachl, *soprano*
Mr. Carl Brown, *baritone*
Mrs. Susan Cooley, *alto*
Mr. Joshua DeFalco, *tenor*
Mrs. Kathy DeFalco, *soprano*
Ms. Halle Dunn, *alto*
Ms. Brenda Loflin, *alto*
Mr. Ed Lutz, *baritone*
Mrs. Peggy Lutz, *tenor*
The Rev^d Richard Paschall, *baritone*
Ms. Barbara Senter, *soprano*



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*The Mission of First United Methodist Church is
To Make and Nurture Christian Disciples Through the Presence and Power of God.*