

A SERVICE OF WORSHIP ON CHRISTMAS DAY

December 25, 2022

*Indicates Congregation Standing

Pre-Service Music

Mitch Peters, Organist

Lighting of the Candles

Stephanie Burke, Acolyte

Reader

Louise Rose

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE OF HOPE

* Hymn 182 – *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

Pastor: We're here on Christmas Day to listen once again to music and the Words of ages past to find comfort in their familiar sounds. They make our hearts overflow with thoughts of the Christmas Season. There's wonder here in the beauty of these windows. The tree. The ornaments. People have travelled far to gather with us today in this Sanctuary to wonder at this Miracle, the birth of our Savior. It rings out through carols and prayers. It's the one day when all the world hears the bells of Christmas ringing out truth and joy to keep this Wonder alive. Some are drawn to the Christmas sounds, just as they are drawn to a warm fire in winter. It's this *once-a-year time* that gives a message of hope, even to those who do not believe in the God we proclaim today. It's a mysterious pulling that brings people of faith to this one day. It's a day of tradition. It's a day we celebrate the wonder, as if we stand on tiptoe at the edge of the manger to peer in at the New Life found in the baby of Bethlehem. This mystery. This miracle. This God with us. Our Emmanuel. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, "*The glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see the salvation of our God.*" (Isa. 40:5)

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE OF PEACE

Isaiah 9:6

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Pastor: This morning, we come once again to the stable in Bethlehem. Our hearts are overflowing with adoration and gratitude with Joseph and Mary. We have lost our innocence. We have lost our sense of wonder that a Child was born unto us. Our hearts sorrow. Perhaps the thought of love and joy and wonder is beyond imagination this year. Our joy has been misplaced. We do not fully understand Your Son came to soften our hearts. So, quiet our hearts. Help us take time to seek You in our lives and in our homes. Watch over our loved ones near and far. Especially, our police and first responders, and those who are in the service of our country. Bring peace to every part of our world. Bless us, your children, with Your warmth and light so You may be born in us again at this Christmas time. We will lift our voices in joyous celebration as we worship You this Christmas morning remembering the One who was born in a manger. The One who came to die on a cross, be resurrected the third day and ascend into heaven. He will come again to take all the faithful to live with him forever. And now, through Scripture, the songs and hymns we sing, they shall teach us about the mystery and wonder of a child born to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Hymn 229 - *The First Noel*

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE OF LOVE

Pastor: Our next carol, "*Silent Night*", is a story about a calm and bright silent night and the wonder of a newborn child. The words were written in 1816 by a young priest in Austria not long after the Napoleonic wars. The priest went for a walk. He looked out over a very quiet, winter-laden town and was inspired. The town was at peace. It was Christmas Eve. The now, famous carol was first performed by the young priest who wrote the lyrics and played the guitar. An organ builder and repair man working at the church took a copy of the six-verse song to his home village where it was picked up and spread by two families of traveling folk singers. As it became known, it was translated into over three hundred languages and sung in churches and town squares. And even on the

battlefield during World War I when a temporary truce was called on Christmas Eve and soldiers could be heard singing the carol simultaneously in French, German, and English from the trenches on the front line of war.

Hymn 186 - *Silent Night*

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE OF JOY

The Visit of the Wise Men *Luke 2:1-6*

THE CHRISTMAS OFFERING

Hymn 233 – *We Three Kings of Orient Are*

Herod's Decree

Matthew 2:7-12

Hymn 218 - *Go, Tell it on the Mountain*

Pastor: On Christmas day 1863, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow heard the Christmas bells ringing and found in them a peace that would come, once again, to his troubled soul and nation. He had lost his wife and his son, tragically. The song is about Christmas bells ringing during the Civil War. The words are "*Hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on earth, good will to men*". But after much sorrow and sadness, Longfellow concluded, the bells were ringing out - - - "*God is not dead, nor doth He sleep*" and that there will in the end be "*...peace on earth, good will to men*". So, as we hear again these words of Longfellow, let us pray our hearts have not been hardened to this Season. *So, let us sing it again*

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along the unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head:
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men."

Till, ringing singing, on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,

A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

We, too, have pain and sorrow in our lives. Perhaps the ways of the world are too heavy. Too much struggle. Too much violence. And then there comes a wonder in the candles that glow. In the bells that ring. And here on this Christmas morning we gather to hear from God again, as if for the very first time. And again, He comes to us. Again, we celebrate the wonder of His love. His love that always comes to us. The love that keeps coming, and coming, and coming. So, make room for His love. Make room for Jesus as your Savior. Let Him enter in and abide with you, as you celebrate once again, His birth at Christmastime.

THE LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Isaiah 9:6

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

***Hymn 179 – Joy to the World!**

During the singing of the hymn Kathy Brock will take “the baby Jesus” up the center aisle to be placed in the manger inside our creche in front of the church.

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24-26)

***And may there be peace, and good will on Earth.
Merry Christmas and Amen.***
