

The Church of the Holy Trinity

Rittenhouse Square

Christmas Eve

4:00 PM

Family Service & Blessing of the Crèche



nativity mural on west wall by Hildreth Meière (1942)

WIDE OPEN DOORS
WIDE OPEN HEARTS

December 24, 2022

Welcome to The Church of the Holy Trinity

We're glad that you're with us!

**We mean it when we say...ALL are WELCOME!
Just as you are – you are welcome!**

Everyone who is with us in person or online is part of our community. For those of you with children (or who are children at heart) – we want you to know how much we love the joyful noises we hear tonight and the excitement that comes during Christmas services!
This is a day that should be filled with all of our excitement!

Please don't worry about hushing noises or questions or making sure everyone is sitting up straight and listening perfectly!
There is no such thing as "too much noise" at a service like this.

You don't need to worry or feel like you did something wrong if they don't remember everything that happened. They are listening and watching and it is all sinking in. They will probably surprise you later with what they learned.

Christmas is a time to remember all the gifts we have been given throughout our lives, but most importantly the gift of love given to us by God in Jesus!

Tonight you will be invited to help decorate the church for Christmas – with your prayers, your songs, and your presence. Our children and youth will narrate the story of the first Christmas. Our Choristers will share their gift of singing with you. Families will bring the pieces of the crèche forward to create the nativity scene while we are singing. Watch as the scene comes to life!

**Jesus Christ is born today!
Merry Christmas**

For more information or to receive our newsletter, please visit www.htrit.org

Special Thanks to:

The Arcaro Family, Ashbaugh/Sumner Family, Bierwirth/Hauer Family, Bullen Family, Gardner Family, Hilbert/Makowsky Family, Lipscomb Family, and Ritter Family

CHRISTMAS EVE

4:00 P.M.

Prelude

THE ENTRANCE RITE

Welcome!

The Rev. Rachel Wenner Gardner, Rector

The Christmas Bidding Prayer

Leader Dear People of God: In this Christmas Season, let it be our duty and delight to hear once more the message of the Angels, to go to Bethlehem and see the Son of God lying in a manger. Let us hear and heed the story of God's loving purpose, and let us make this place glad with our carols of praise.

The Entrance Hymn: O come, all ye faithful

Adeste Fidelis

1 O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant, O
2 God from God, Light from Light e - ter - nal,
3 Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,

1 come ye, O come ye to Beth - le - hem;
2 lo! he ab - hors not the Vir - gin's womb;
3 sing, all ye ci - ti - zens of heaven a - bove;

1 come, and be - hold him, born the King of an - gels;
2 on - ly - be - got - ten Son of the Fa - ther;
3 glo - ry to God, glo - ry in the high - est;

Refrain

O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a -
 dore him, O come, let us a - dore him, Christ the Lord.

4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
 born this happy morning;
 Jesus, to thee be glory given;
 Word of the Father,
 now in flesh appearing;

Refrain

Leader Behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will come to all the people. For to you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

People **Glory to God for ever and ever! And peace to God's people on earth.**

Leader The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Leader Let us pray.

Good and gracious God, on this holy night you have given us your Son, the Lord of the universe, wrapped in swaddling clothes; the Savior of all, lying in a manger. On this holy night, draw us into the mystery of your love. Join our voices with heaven's angels, that we may sing your glory on high. Give us a place among the shepherds, that we may find the one for whom we have waited: Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, in the splendor of eternal light, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Narrator 1 This night is like no other night. It is a time to dream and sing our way to Bethlehem. The children will show us how to go. The little town we seek sits in the hill country about ten miles south of Jerusalem. For thousands of years the houses have gathered there on the hill top like a family breaking bread. Bethlehem means House of Bread. In the center of the village is a small inn. On this night it is overflowing with people seeking sleep and a place to eat. Behind the inn is a dark stable. A gray donkey chews his barley and broken straw while a weary cow leans and rests after a day's plowing in the valley. A sheep nearby is nearly asleep. All is still in the little town.

Hymn: O Little Town of Bethlehem

St. Louis

1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!

1 A - bove thy deep and dream - less sleep the si - lent stars go by;

1 yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing Light;

1 the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.

The Hilbert/Makowsky family brings forward the donkey, sheep and cow.

Narrator 2 As night gathers, the last two travelers come slowly up the road. Look, there is a young woman about to be a mother. She is walking with her husband. They are Joseph and Mary from Nazareth! They have walked for six days to come to this city where King David was born, so long ago.

Narrator 3 They have come, like so many others, because the Roman emperor wants to count each one, so he can take their money as tax. But it is late, and Mary is so tired. Where will they sleep? There is no room in the inn. They decided to sleep with the animals.

Hymn: Once in Royal David's City

Irby

the Choristers sing verse 1, congregation joins with verse 6

1 Once in roy - al Da - vid's ci - ty stood a
6 Not in that poor low - ly sta - ble, with the

1 low - ly cat - tle shed, where a mo - ther laid her
6 ox - en stand - ing round, we shall see him; but in

1 ba - by in a man - ger for his bed: Ma - ry
6 hea - ven, where his saints his throne sur - round: Christ, re -

1 was that mo - ther mild, — Je - sus Christ her lit - tle child. —
6 vealed to faith - ful eye, — set at God's right hand on high. —

The Ashbaugh/Sumner Family brings forward Mary and Joseph.

Narrator 4 Stars brighten slowly in the sky. All creation hold its breath. Suddenly from the stable comes the cry of a newborn child! Mary gently wraps the baby in a blanket and lays him in the feedbox that his father has filled with straw.

Hymn: Away in a Manger

Cradle Song

1 A - way in a man-ger, no crib for his bed,
the lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.

The Ritter Family brings forward Baby Jesus.

Narrator 5 In the hills outside Bethlehem, shepherds watch their shadowy sheep. All at once the dark is lost in light, and the midst of the light is something even brighter: the Faces of angels. The fearful shepherds then hear music in the sky, and a voice says clearly,

Narrator 6 “Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by all people. Today in the City of David a Savior is born! He is Christ, the lord.”

Narrator 5 Then more angels appear, a whole heavenly host of them, praising God and singing:

All “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will to all people, everywhere.”

Narrator 7 The Shepherds run with Joy across the fields to Bethlehem to the barn behind the inn. There they find the Holy Family and creep forward overwhelmed with mystery, to find Jesus in the center of all that love.

Hymn: Angels We Have Heard on High

Gloria

1 An - gels we have heard on high, sing - ing sweet - ly through the night,
and the moun - tains in re - ply ech - o - ing their brave de - light.

Refrain
Glo - ri - a
in ex - cel - sis De - o. Glo - ri - a
in ex - cel - sis De - o.

The Bullen Family brings forward the Shepherds and Angel.

Narrator 8 Three camels plod up the road to Bethlehem. They come from the East, far beyond the Arabian Desert, perhaps from as far as the Caspian Sea. The camels carry three kings, the Wise Ones, the Magi. They are following the wild star, the destiny they had never seen before, and they are following it where it goes to find the king its shining shows them.

Hymn: We Three Kings

Three Kings of Orient

1 We three kings of O - ri - ent are, bear - ing
 1 gifts we tra - verse a - far, field and foun - tain,
 1 moor and moun - tain, fol - low - ing yon - der star.

Refrain
 O star of won - der, star of night,
 star with roy - al beau - ty bright; west - ward lead - ing,
 still pro - ceed - ing, guide us to thy per - fect light!

The Souffie Family brings forward the three kings and places them in the aisle.

Narrator 9 They will not reach the stable for another 12 days until the Feast of Epiphany. When they do, their journey will end with a new kind of king. Their restlessness will rest at last. They will fall to their knees and give him bright gold, sweet-smelling frankincense and bitter myrrh, brought so far with so much love.

Narrator 10 So now we all come, following the star, to find God with us. We come, as people have come all through the ages, to bring our own gifts to this Child, God's gift to us. The Crèche is now set, the story now told. We invite you to light up your candles as we sing Silent Night.

Candles can be lit now.

Hymn: Silent Night

Stille Nacht

Si - lent night, ho - ly night, all is calm,
Ho - ly in - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in hea - ven - ly
all is bright round von vir - gin mo - ther and child.
peace. Sleep in hea - ven - ly peace.

The Homily

The Rev. Rachel Wenner Gardner

The Blessing of the Crèche

Leader O great mystery, and wonderful sacrament, that animals should see the new-born Lord, lying in a manger! Blessed is Mary who will give birth to Christ the Lord. Alleluia! The Word was made flesh

People **And dwelt among us.**

Leader Let us pray. Almighty God, who in the Incarnation of your Son has revealed to us the holiness of creation, be pleased to bless and hallow this image of his sacred birth, so that those who gaze upon it may behold this mystery, whereby humanity shares in your very nature; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Blessing

Leader May Christ, who by his Incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with joy and peace; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always.

Closing Hymn 100: Joy to the World

Antioch

during this hymn, we will be passing the Christmas Offering Plate. To to give digitally, text CHT DONATE to 73256.

1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth re -
2 Joy to the world! the Sa - vior reigns; let us our
*3 No more let sins and sor - rows grow, nor thorns in -
4 He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the

ceive her King; let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room, and
songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains, re -
fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings flow far
na - tions prove the glo - ries of his right - eous - ness, and

heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his

1 and heaven and na - ture sing, and
 2 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re -
 3 far as the curse is found, far
 4 and won - ders of his love, and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heaven and na - ture sing,
 peat the sound - ing joy,
 as the curse is found,
 won - ders of his love,

Dismissal

Leader Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Readers:

Narrator 1 - Emily Bierwirth
 Narrator 2 - Gage Arcaro
 Narrator 3 - Boyden Gardner
 Narrator 4 - Jay Bullen
 Narrator 5 - Quinn Gardner
 Narrator 6 - Willa Ritter
 Narrator 7 - Rosie Ritter
 Narrator 8 - Raina Arcaro
 Narrator 9 - Robert Lipscomb
 Narrator 10 - Henry Lipscomb

Participants:

Officiants - The Rev. John Gardner
 Preacher - The Rev. Rachel Wenner Gardner
 Diaconal Postulant: Beth Hollingshead
 Director of Music - Dr. Donald Meineke

Choristers & Acolytes

Connor Gardner
 Quinn Gardner,
 Henry Lipscomb
 Robert Lipscomb