

The Church of the Holy Trinity

Rittenhouse Square

Christmas Eve

2:00 PM

Family Service
& *Blessing of the Crèche*



December 24, 2023

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 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!

Narrators:

Emily Bierwirth
Jay Bullen
Quinn Gardner
Henry Lipscomb
Robert Lipscomb
Rosie Ritter
Willa Ritter

Participants:

Officiant – The Rev. Rachel Wenner Gardner
Preacher – The Rev. John Gardner
Director of Music – Dr. Donald Meineke

Families Participating

The Souffie Family, The Hilbert/Makowsky Family,
The Reeder-Thornton Family, The Bullen Family,
and the Ritter Family

For more information, or to join our mailing list,
visit www.htrit.org

Prelude

From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

Johann Sebastian Bach

Welcome

The Rev. Rachel Wenner Gardner, Rector

The Christmas Bidding Prayer

Presider

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:

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 -



Presider 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.**

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Celebrant 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.**

The Christmas Story

Narrator 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.

The Souffie family brings forward the donkey, sheep and cow.

1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
 2 For Christ is born of Ma - ry; and gath - ered all a - bove,
 3 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly, the won - drous gift is given!
 *4 Where child - ren pure and hap - py pray to the bless - ed Child,
 5 O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;

1 A - bove thy deep and dream - less sleep the si - lent stars go by;
 2 while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - dering love.
 3 So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heaven.
 4 where mis - er - y cries out to thee, Son of the mo - ther mild;
 5 cast out our sin and en - ter in, be born in us to - day.

1 yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing Light;
 2 O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth!
 3 No ear may hear his com - ing, but in this world of sin,
 4 where char - i - ty stands watch - ing and faith holds wide the door,
 5 We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;

1 the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
 2 and prais - es sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.
 3 where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
 4 the dark night wakes, the glo - ry breaks, and Christ - mas comes once more.
 5 O come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el!

Narrator

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.

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.

The Reeder-Thornton Family brings forward Mary and Joseph.

Carol

Irby

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. —

Narrator 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.

The Hilbert/Makowsky brings forward Baby Jesus.

Hymn

Cradle Song

1 A - way in a man-ger, no crib for his bed,
2 The cat - tle are low - ing, the ba - by a - wakes,
*3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask thee to stay

the lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down his sweet head.
but lit - tle Lord Je - sus no cry - ing he makes.
close by me for ev - er, and love me I pray.

The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
I love thee, Lord Je - sus! Look down from the sky,
Bless all the dear chil - dren in thy ten - der care,

the lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.
and stay by my side un - til morn - ing is nigh.
and fit us for hea - ven to live with thee there.

Narrator 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, “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.” 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 everyone, everywhere.”

Narrator

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.

The Bullen Family brings forward the Shepherds and Angel.

Carol

Gloria

1 An - gels we have heard on high, sing - ing sweet - ly through the night,
2 Shep - herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why these songs of hap - py cheer?
3 Come to Beth - le - hem and see him whose birth the an - gels sing;

and the moun - tains in re - ply ech - o - ing their brave de - light.
What great bright - ness did you see? What glad tid - ings did you hear?
come, a - dore on bend - ed knee Christ, the Lord, the new - born King.

Refrain

Glo - - - - - ri - a

in ex - cel - sis De - o. Glo - - - - -

Narrator

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.

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

Carol

Three Kings of Orient

1 We three kings of O - ri - ent are, bear - ing
2 Born a King on Beth - le - hem's plain, gold I
3 Frank - in - cense to of - fer have I: in - cense
4 Myrrh is mine; its bit - ter per - fume breathes a

1 gifts we tra - verse a - far, field and foun - tain,
2 bring to crown him a - gain, King for ev - er,
3 owns a De - i - ty nigh; prayer and prais - ing,
4 life of gath - er - ing gloom; sor - rowing, sigh - ing,

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!

Narrator

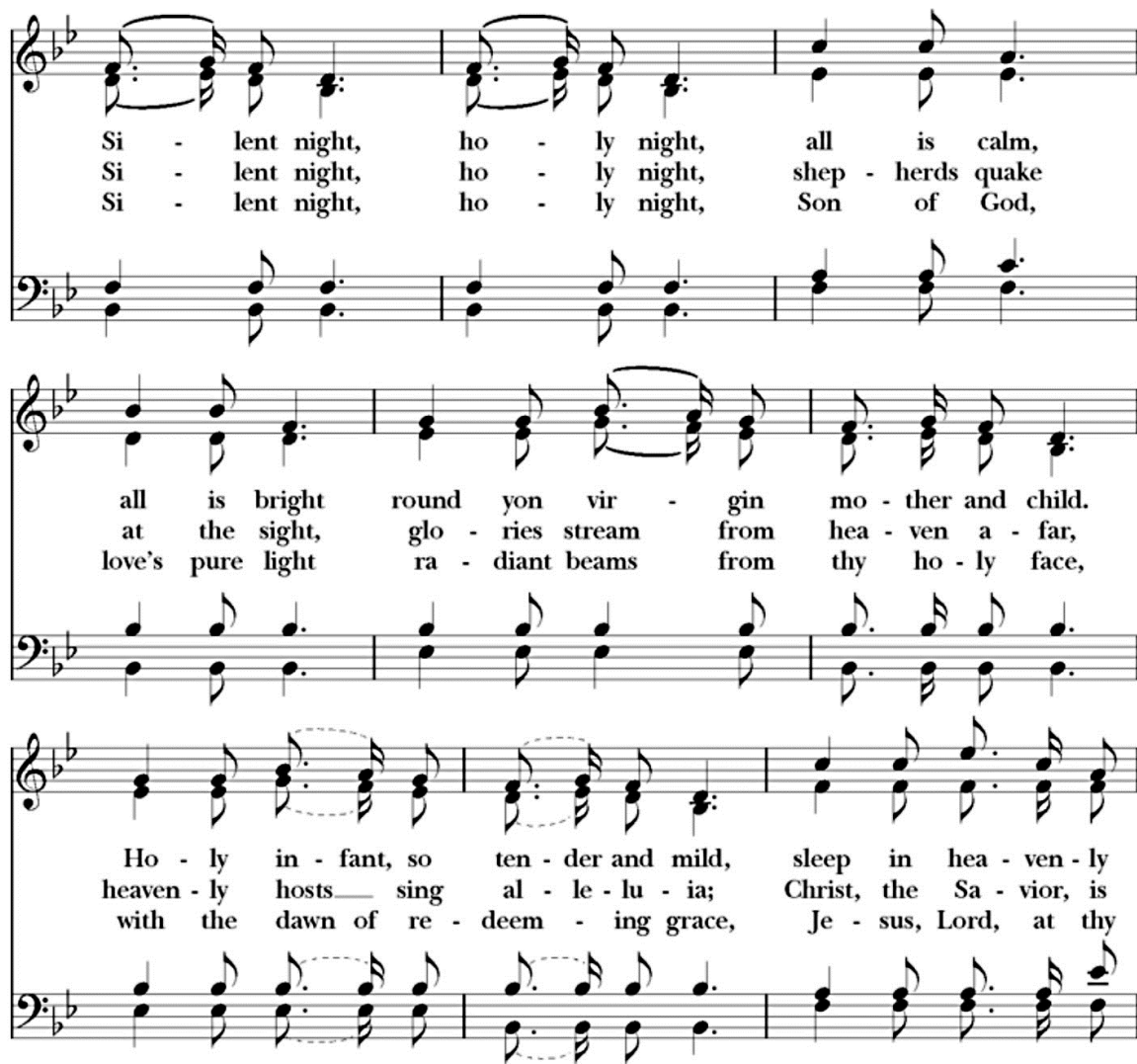
They will not reach the stable for another 12 days until the Feast of Epiphany. When they do, their journey will end with a new kind of king. Their restlessness will rest at last. They will fall to their knees and give him bright gold, sweet-smelling frankincense and bitter myrrh, brought so far with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

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.

Carol

Stille Nacht



Si - lent night, ho - ly night, all is calm,
Si - lent night, ho - ly night, shep - herds quake
Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Son of God,

all is bright round yon vir - gin mo - ther and child.
at the sight, glo - ries stream from hea - ven a - far,
love's pure light ra - diant beams from thy ho - ly face,

Ho - ly in - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in hea - ven - ly
heaven - ly hosts— sing al - le - lu - ia; Christ, the Sa - vior, is
with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at thy

peace.
born!
birth.

Sleep
Christ,
Je - sus,

in
the
Sa - vior,
Lord,

in
hea - ven - ly
at thy

peace.
born!
birth.

The Homily

The Rev. John Gardner

The Blessing of the Crèche

Presider O great mystery, and wonderful sacrament, that animals should see the newborn 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.**

Celebrant 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

Celebrant 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.

During this hymn, we will be passing the Christmas Offering Plate. 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

Dismissal

Presider Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
 People Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

J. S. Bach

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