

The Church of the Holy Trinity

Rittenhouse Square

Christmas Eve

4:00 PM

Family Service
& Blessing of the Crèche



December 24, 2025

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!

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!

Participants:

Narrators:

Quinn Gardner
Connor Gardner
Ian Hilbert
Robert Lipscomb
Henry Lipscomb
Willa Ritter
Rosie Ritter

Officiants:

The Rev. Rachel Wenner Gardner, *Rector*
The Rev. John Gardner, *Rector*

Music:

Ben Leiby, *Organist & Choirmaster*
Members of the Choir of Holy Trinity, *quartet*

Acolytes:

The Lipscomb Family



Prelude

The Open Door

Jason Sagle

Jason Sagle, piano Amy Perkins, Flute

Welcome

The Rev. John Gardner, *Rector*

Please rise in body or in spirit

The Christmas Bidding Prayer

Officiant 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 Carol 83

Adeste Fidelis

1 O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant, 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 Bethlehem;
2 lo! he ab-hors not the Virgin'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.

Officiant 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.**

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Officiant 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.**

Please be seated.

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 donkey, sheep and cow are brought forward.

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 blessed 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!

"O Little Town of Bethlehem" was written by Phillips Brooks (our second Rector) for the Sunday School at The Church of Holy Trinity in 1868, after he had visited Bethlehem in 1865. The fourth stanza was not included in the hymnal until 1940 and is still missing from many hymnals. Brooks' organist, Lewis H. Redner, wrote the original tune for these words. The hymn was first published in 1874 and the tune was named St. Louis.

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.

Mary & Joseph are brought forward

Carol 102

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.

Baby Jesus is brought forward

Carol 101

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

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

the 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 Shepherds and Angel are brought forward

Carol 96

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 three kings and camel are brought forward and placed in the aisle.

Carol 128

Three Kings of Orient

1 We three kings of O - ri - ent are, bearing
 2 Born a King on Beth - le - hem's plain, gold I
 3 Frank - in - cense to of - fer have I:
 4 Myrrh is mine; its bit - ter per - fume breathes a
 5 Glo - rious now be - hold him a - rise, King and

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,
 5 God and Sac - ri - fice; heaven sings al - le -

1 moor and moun - tain, fol - low - ing yon - der star.
 2 ceas - ing nev - er o - ver us all to reign.
 3 glad - ly rais - ing, wor - ship him, God Most High.
 4 bleed - ing, dy - ing, sealed in the stone - cold tomb.
 5 lu - ia: al - le - lu - ia the earth re - plies.

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 honor this moment as we sing Silent Night together.

Carol 111

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. Sleep in hea - ven - ly peace.
 born! Christ, the Sa - vior, is born!
 birth. Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth.

The Homily

The Rev. John Gardner

Carol 100

Antioch

During the hymn we will be passing the offering plates. If you prefer to give online, you can text **CHT DONATE** to 73256 or scan the QR Code to the right. Your generous gifts go to support our Open Hearts Café, the magnificent Music Programs by our Choir, our amazing staff and this beautiful building.



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

Please rise in body or in spirit

The Lord's Prayer

All 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, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Blessing of the Crèche

Officiant 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.

Officiant 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

Officiant May Christ fill you with joy and peace this Christmas season; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Carol 87

Mendelssohn

1 Hark! the herald angels sing glo - ry to the new-born King!
2 Christ, by high-est heaven a - dored; Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord;
3 Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,
Peace on earth and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!
late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of the Vir-gin's womb.
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.
Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise, join the tri-umph of the skies;
Veiled in flesh the God - head see; hail the in-car - nate De - i - ty.
Risen with heal-ing in his wings, light and life to all he brings,
with the an - gel - ic host pro - claim Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!
Pleased as man with us to dwell; Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el!
hail, the Sun of Right-eous - ness! hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!

Refrain

Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing glo - ry to the new - born King!

Dismissal

Officiant Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

Postlude *In dulci jubilo* J. S. Bach

Permission to reprint, podcast or stream music in this service obtained by ONE LICENSE #A-735450

What's Happening This Week:

Morning Prayer is held every weekday at 9:00 am on Facebook.

Date	Time	Event	Location
Wednesday, December 24	⊕ 8:00 pm	Christmas Eve Lessons & Carols	Church
Thursday, December 25	⊕ 10:00 am	Christmas Service (Service will <u>not</u> be streamed) *No Healing Eucharist and No Morning Prayer Church is closed following Christmas Day Service	Church
Friday, December 26		Church offices closed, No Morning Prayer	
Sunday, December 28		No Adult Education Class, Will Convene again January 11 ⊕ 11:00 am Holy Eucharist—First Sunday After Christmas ⊕ 4:00 pm Open Hearts Café Meal/Clothing	Church Centennial Room

SAVE THE DATE:

Wednesday January 7, 2025: Epiphany Evensong

Afterward, enjoy King Cake in the Narthex and help take down Christmas decorations

The Church of the Holy Trinity - Clergy and Staff

The Rev. Rachel Wenner Gardner, *Rector*

The Rev. John Gardner, *Rector*

Chiquita Anderson & Therese Tiger, *Welcome Coordinators*

Jack Baranoski, Boyden Gardner, & Jonah Shortall, *Streaming Services*

Shawn "Shiz" Futch & Mike Whitney, *Operations Support*

Benjamin Leiby, *Organist-Choirmaster*

Karen Majer, *Rentals & Evens Manager*

Inaara Neal-Shiraz, *Director of Development & Communications*

Robyn Schnieders, *Director of Operations & Outreach*

Demetrius Swinson, *Operations Coordinator AKA Superman*

Dr. Stephen Framil, *Musician-in-Residence*

Dr. John French, *Organist-Choirmaster emeritus*

The Choir of Holy Trinity

Hannah Bashore, Nathaniel Bear, Gail Caruso, Patricia Conrad, Stephanie DeMane, Will Dowling, Samuel Evans, Franny Geller, Andrew Gutknecht, Samual Keeler, Thomas Kneeland, Alex Mathews, John Miles, Aimee Pilgermayer, Eddie Rubeiz, Erica Rose Smith, and Julianna Smith

The Church of the Holy Trinity - Vestry

Brian Conroy, Phillip Duffy, Alyssa Force, Monica Heuer, Margaret Hughes, Simson Hui, Susan Leidy, Jeff McEldowney, James Otwell, Ali Shott, Daniel Tancredi, Karen Vannasdall

THE CHURCH OF
THE HOLY TRINITY
RITTENHOUSE SQUARE

