

The Oxen

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.
“Now they are all on their knees,”
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
“Come; see the oxen kneel,

“In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,”
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

-Thomas Hardy





FARMINGTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
SERVICE OF DIVINE WORSHIP

Christmas Eve
December 24, 2021

ASSEMBLE IN GOD'S NAME

WELCOME

PRELUDE "In Dulci Jubilo"

Dupre

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH†

THE WANN FAMILY

*HYMN OF PRAISE – No. 113

Verses 1 & 2

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

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

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

**Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains
prolong? What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your
heavenly song? *Refrain.***

*CALL TO WORSHIP††

We come to adore you, little one.

On bended knee,

with hopeful heart,

and eyes stretched wide with wonder and awe.

The gentleness of your gaze

draws us into the mystery of all that lies beyond,

and in that place of falling into joy

we yield all that we are to you.

And we pray.

For those who are broken,

Those who seek,

The trembling and the rumbling tummies,

The haggard spirits and the ragged lives.

For those who cling to the last best thing,

and those whose hearts pine for love.

Bless us, O Lord, whom we adore,
and turn our faces ever toward you.
**For peace,
for mercy,
for the sake of all that is holy.
We come to adore you, O Christ.**

(The hymn concludes.)

*HYMN OF PRAISE – No. 113

Verse 3

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

**Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee Christ, the Lord, the newborn
King. Refrain.**

(Please be seated.)

CALL TO RECONCILIATION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy God, you know our hearts. You see all we do and fail to do. You hear what we say and what we don't. You formed us in your image, with hope for who we would be and how we would impact the world. Over and over again, we have chosen the ways of this world, of power and privilege, of the false security of financial stability, and of pride. Your image within us has been cloaked in darkness, not allowed to reveal your way.

Wrap us in your mercy, Grace swaddled in mystery, and forgive us. Let us draw near to the manger and worship this One who is born not into wealth and power but into poverty and weakness, to the One who loves unconditionally and welcomes all. Draw us closer to the One who drew near to us, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

KYRIE

**Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

*GLORIA – NO. 119

Verse 3

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the sun of righteousness! Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings. Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die, born to raise us from the earth, born to give

us second birth. Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe in Jesus Christ, born to us all so long ago in Bethlehem of Judea.

We believe in Him whose birth glorified Bethlehem, but for whom there was no room in the inn.

We believe in Him whose guiding star can bring together the humble and wise everywhere.

We believe in Him who walked among the common people, and was welcomed by those with open minds and yearning hearts.

We believe in Him whose life changed the course of history, over whom kings had no power, whose life humbled the proud, toppled the mighty, and elevated those of low degree.

We believe in Him whose love changed human hearts, and whose life and death on the cross proved that it is more important to serve than to be served.

We believe in Him who is the Prince of Peace, whose spirit makes for justice and peace among all peoples.

We believe in Him who is Emmanuel, whose presence changes the world through the power of love, faith and hope.

PROCLAIM GOD’S WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

FIRST READING

Psalm 97

The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice. Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side. His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all peoples see his glory. All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols worship him, all you gods! Zion hears and rejoices and the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments, LORD. For you, LORD, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods. Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked. Light shines on the righteous and joy on the upright in heart. Rejoice in the LORD, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.

This is the Word of the Lord!

Thanks be to God!

SECOND READING

Luke 2:1-20

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

This is the Word of the Lord!

Thanks be to God!

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

SERMON

“Kneeling in God’s Presence”

Rev. Rebecca Luter

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Please remember those on our prayer list.

RESPOND TO GOD

PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY ANTHEM “All This Night My Heart Rejoices” Ebeling

*DOXOLOGY

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise him all creatures here below.
Praise him above, ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Emmanuel, shine your light and love upon these gifts and upon us. Dedicate them and us to bringing peace in this world. By your Holy Spirit, fill us, intertwine us, enwrap us with your power that is beyond this world and at the same time comes as close as our next breath so that when the ringing of the bells fades and the candles are blown out, your light may continue to shine. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE LORD’S TABLE

PRAYER OF GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks for the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

SUNG RESPONSES – No. 552, 553, & 554

THE LORD’S PRAYER

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

SHARING THE BREAD AND THE CUP

*The Communion elements we share are
gluten, sugar, nut, and dairy-free bread and white grape juice.*

LITANY OF LIGHT

Emmanuel, God-with-us,
interrupt and open our eyes to the wonder of this night,
that we might catch a glimpse of your glory.

May your light shine!

Emmanuel, God-with-us,
interrupt and soften our hearts to the message of this hour,
that we might prepare for your coming.

May your light shine!

Emmanuel, God-with-us,
interrupt and open our minds to truly listen to all
that we might hear your voice cry out from many lips.

May your light shine!

Emmanuel, God-with-us,
with eyes open, hearts softened, minds listening, and spirits full,
we rejoice that you interrupt and transform our world
that we might respond to your message of love.

May your light shine! Amen.

As we pray that the light of Emmanuel would shine in our dark world, we acknowledge that we are the bearers of the light. The light of Christ shines in our world only as we allow it to shine in us.

LIGHTING THE CANDLES

* HYMN NO. 122 “Silent Night, Holy Night!”

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.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight; glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing “Al-le-lu-ia: Christ the Savior is born; Christ the Savior is born!”

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.

Silent night, holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light; with the angels let us sing Al-le-lu-ia to our King: Christ the Savior is born; Christ the Savior is born.

* INVITATION, CHARGE AND BLESSING

* SENDING FORTH HYMN – No. 134 “Joy to the World” Verses 1 & 4
**Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king;
let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and
nature sing.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the
nations prove the glories of his righteousness and wonders of
his love, and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his
love.**

* POSTLUDE “Silent Night”

* Stand as able. **Bold Type** – congregation in unison

†Advent Wreath Liturgy by Rev. Ruth Lovell Bradham

‡ Call to Worship written by Rev. Anne Fraley

Reprinted with permission under One License #731533-A and CCLI
#1162543-A. All rights reserved.

Participating in the service today:

Rev. Rebecca Luter, Pastor
Doug Barr, Director of Christian Education
Jim Thrash, Director of Music
Tom Bryant, Accompanist
Rev. Ruth Lovell Bradham, Liturgist
Scott Hutchins and Paula Patterson, Ushers
Abigail Palmer, Acolyte



THIS SERVICE IS BEING LIVE-STREAMED
AND RECORDED. ATTENDEES
IMPLICITLY AGREE THAT THEY, AND
ANY CHILDREN ACCOMPANYING
THEM, MAY BE ON CAMERA.

FARMINGTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
8245 Farmington Blvd.
Germantown, TN 38139
901-754-2794 www.farmingtonpres.org