

A decorative card featuring the word "Christ" written in a black, elegant cursive font on a white, torn-edged paper background. The card is set against a dark grey, textured fabric backdrop. A piece of yellowish, aged paper is taped to the top edge of the white paper. Fresh greenery, including various leaves and stems, is artfully arranged around the card, with some leaves overlapping the white paper and others extending onto the grey background. The overall aesthetic is rustic and elegant.

Christ



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"Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together."

December 24, 2021

Christmas Eve

Prelude Selections

The Wexford Carol

Traditional Irish folk melody

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Polish Carol

He Shall Feed His Flock Like A Shepherd

G. F. Handel

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd,
and He shall gather the lambs with his arms
and carry them in His bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.

Come unto Him, all ye that labor.
come unto Him, ye that are heavy laden,
and He will give you rest.

Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him,
for He is meek and lowly of heart,
and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Scripture

Luke 2:1, 4-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family

of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to who he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Meditation

The waiting is over. The baby has arrived. Soon angels will speak to shepherds and wise men will bring gifts and an evil political power will begin a long effort to snuff out the good news of this night. [*pause*] For now, though, it is quiet.

A baby is born and two parents are simply grateful for his safe arrival. He will change their lives, as all babies do. But much more importantly, he will offer the possibility of changed lives for everyone born after him. The angel will tell the shepherds – “I am bringing you good news of great joy, for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”

For all people -- a Savior. The one who will redeem us not so much from evil political powers, but from the lesser parts of ourselves that destroy both us and others. He will teach us how to think about what is important. He will model for us how to respond to those who are different and disenfranchised. He will show us a path to peace and right living that can make our world safe and welcoming for all.

To embrace his teaching and follow in his steps is not easy. We must set aside self-interest and stand with courage for what is right and just. It is hard to follow him. But there is good news. We are not alone. We are never alone.

Tonight we claim again that, indeed, there is Emmanuel – God with us. We need not wait for a day in the future when we stand in heaven with God. Jesus has come to us. Here. Now. We have a Savior. The one who will help us to find ourselves – our best selves – and bring His light into the world.

The Christ Candle

One: We light the final candle of Advent to celebrate the birth of God's Son, our Savior and King.

All: We celebrate again Christ's coming into our world and await the day when God's Kingdom on earth is our reality.

* Carol

It came upon a midnight clear (vv. 1-2, 5)

It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to all
from heaven's gracious king."
The world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come
with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heav'nly music floats
o'er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lowly plains
they bend on hov'ring wing,
And ever o'er its Babel-sounds
the blessed angels sing.

For lo, the days are hast'ning on,
by prophet bards foretold,
when with the ever circling years
comes round the age of gold,
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world send back the song
which now the angels sing.

Christmas Prayer

Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father, Help us to remember the birth of Jesus that we may share in the songs of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every good gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful hearts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Carol

Away in a manger

(vv. 1-3)

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS

(from *The Message*, by Eugene H. Peterson)

Lesson

Mary's Miracle

Luke 1:26-38 (RSV)

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Hail, O

avored one, the Lord is with you!” ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, “How shall this be, since I have no husband?” ³⁵ And the angel said to her,

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

³⁶ And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For with God nothing will be impossible.” ³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

Carol

O come, all ye faithful

(vv. 1, 3-4)

O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him,
born the King of angels.
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation;
sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above;
glory to God,
all glory in the highest.

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning,
Jesus, to thee
be all glory giv'n;
Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing.

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Lesson

Joseph's Dream

Matthew 1:18-25 (RSV)

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; ¹⁹ and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; ²¹ she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³ "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (*which means, God with us*). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

Carol

O come, O come, Immanuel

(vv. 1, 3, 6)

O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here,
until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice, rejoice! Immanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here.
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice, rejoice! Immanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind.
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease.
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace,
Rejoice, rejoice! Immanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Lesson

Jesus' Birth

Luke 2:1-7 (RSV)

2 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. ²This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. ⁷And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

* Carol

Hark! the herald angels sing

(vv. 1-3)

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful all ye nations, rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with th' angelic host proclaim
"Christ is born in Bethlehem.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!"

Christ by highest heav'n adored;
Christ the everlasting Lord,
late in time before him come,
offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veil'd in flesh the Godhead see,
hail th'incarnate deity;,
pleas'd with us in flesh to dwell;
Jesus, our Immanuel!
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!"

Hail, the heav'nborn Prince of peace!
Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
ris'n 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 new-born King!"

Lesson

Angel's Joy

Luke 2:8-14 (RSV)

⁸ And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; ¹¹ for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"

Carol

Angels, we have heard on high

(vv. 1-2)

Angels we have heard on high,
singing sweetly through the night,
and the mountains in reply
echoing their brave delight.

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why these songs of happy cheer?
What great brightness did you see?
What glad tiding did you hear?
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Lesson

Shepherd's Search

Luke 2:15-20 (RSV)

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Carol

The first Noel, the angel did say

(vv. 1-3)

The first Noel, the angel did say,
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay -
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east, beyond them far,

and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
born is the King of Israel.

And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far.
To seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
born is the King of Israel.

LIGHTING OUR CHRISTMAS CANDLES

Silent Meditation

* **Carol** *Silent night, holy night* (vv. 1, 3-4)

(As we sing, let us share the light of Christ with one another by passing
the flame from one candle to the next.

Please, tip your unlit candle to receive the flame.)

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! 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, bend thy light.
With the angels let us sing
“Alleluia” to our King.
“Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.”

* **Chiming of the Christmas Bell**

* **The Lord's Prayer**

#731

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. AMEN

* **Sending**

Please exit the sanctuary quietly through the front doors and deposit your candle in a basket before you leave the building.

* Please, stand as able and led

We thank the musicians, readers, and many others
for their help with tonight's service.

*Every child on earth is holy,
Every crib is a manger lowly,
Every home is a stable dim,
Every kind word is a hymn,
Every star is God's own gem,
And every town is Bethlehem,
For Christ is born and born again,
When his love lives in the heart of men.*

—W. D. Dorrity

MINISTERS ALL MEMBERS

Pastor.....David Whitten

Prelude Musicians..... Bill Kinzie & David Whitten

Bob & Pat Gangwer and Jeff & Carol Goss

Sarah Hartman, Bill Kinzie, and Bob Phillips

Advent ReadersKen & Ginny Heatwole

Christmas Story Readers.....Jori Carter, Thoko Lipato

Candle Lighters Bob & Pat Gangwer

FlautistSarah Hartman

Guitarist.....David Whitten

PianistBob Phillips

Violinist Bill Kinzie

ChoristerBob Gangwer

Media & Technology DirectorKevin Beers



Christ