

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

INTROIT

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

L: Now is the time to approach the manger! Now is the time our dreams come to life! Now is the time God's Promise is fulfilled!

P: Hope gives way to joy and prayer to proclamation.

Our candles illuminate our story. Dawn invades midnight.

(Lighting of the Christ Candle)

L: The Light of the World has come.

P: And this is a light for all; igniting a flame within our souls, warming us from within.

L: This gift of Light radiates God's love, lighting our lives with the presence of Emmanuel, God-with-us, God-within-us, and God among us, now and forever.

P: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill to all!

***CAROL** *"O Come, All Ye Faithful"* UMH No. 234

OPENING PRAYER O great and glorious God, like the sudden brilliance of angels shining into sleepy shepherds' eyes, you bring us surprising mercy in the darkness of our hearts. You lead us to ponder the treasures to be found in every humble circumstance, like that of the holy family lodged with animals bedded in straw. You lead us to ponder your hand in all mysteries and wonders, like Mary treasuring the simple joy of her child's birth. We praise you for the gift of your Son, for such a treasure now entrusted to our care. Give us joy to proclaim the Savior's birth – the One in whom the world shall find life and peace. Amen.

***CAROL** *"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"* UMH No. 240

A LITANY OF CONFESSION AND DEDICATION

We thought we knew where to find you; we hardly needed a star to guide the way, just perseverance and common sense; why do you hide yourself away from the powerful and join the refugees and outcasts, calling us to follow you there?

Wise God, give us wisdom.

We thought we had laid you safe in the manger; we wrapped you in the thickest sentiment we could find, and stressed how long ago you came to us; why do you break upon us in our daily life with messages of peace and goodwill, demanding that we do something about it?

Just and righteous God, give us justice and righteousness.

So where else would we expect to find you but in the ordinary place with the faithful people, turning the world to your purpose through them.

Bring us to that manger, to that true rejoicing, which will make wisdom, justice and righteousness alive in us. Amen.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

In gentleness and strength, God brings down the powerful from their thrones, and lifts up those who have no thrones, no titles. God fills the hungry with good things, and keeps the promise to stand with us whatever may come. By God's grace, we are loved and forgiven. **Thanks be to God!**

PASSING OF THE PEACE

Proclaiming the Birth of the Christ Child

SCRIPTURE LESSON *Isaiah 9:2-7*

A PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS

THE LORD'S PRAYER

***CAROL** *"Angels We Have Heard on High"* UMH No. 238

EPISTLE LESSON

Titus 2:11-14

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION Guide us on this holiest of nights, O God, by your Word and Holy Spirit, that in your light we may see light, in your truth find freedom, and in your will discover your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 2:1-20

SERMON “A Sense of Wonder” *Rev. Stephen Cady*

***CAROL** “O Little Town of Bethlehem” UMH No. 230

OFFERTORY

SHARING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST’S LOVE

(As the light of the Christ Candle is passed, remember to tip only the unlit candle. Please extinguish your candle as the sanctuary lights are raised.)

***CAROLS** see insert

*What Child Is This
Away in a Manger
Silent Night, Holy Night*

***BENEDICTION** *The Work of Christmas* Howard Thurman

*Those who are able, please stand.