



Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Thursday, December 24th 2020

Dear Lake Toxaway family and community,

Christmas Eve prompts many memories for all of us and it is easy to find ourselves drawn to sentiment rather than the spiritual. Because of the different ways many of us will celebrate Christmas this year, I hope one of the things we can hold closely is the fragility and innocence of a God who came as a baby in a manger in Bethlehem to usher in salvation for the world.

This Good News brings a true celebration; a joyful anticipation has come to fruition. We sing carols and proclaim this mystery; we also remember transformation always takes longer than we think it should. And transition often begins with something small, a new vision, a stronger hope, a baby in the manger. Something small will change everything!

But for now, we welcome this child, this stranger, this God come among us! We welcome the sojourner and the faithful together with the one who comes with healing. We join shepherds, animals, and Magi to worship this child.

This is a night for celebration and reflection! Whether it is loud and raucous, or quiet and reflective, there needs to be celebration that God is faithful and that the Promised One is with us, Emmanuel.

As the scriptures are read tonight, I am not going to try to explain it. I am letting the word speak for itself. May we wonder at it; may awe fill our worship even in our remote and separate locations. It is a joyful awe that sweeps everyone up into one heart and mind and brings the faithful and the straggler back year after year. As we light candles, remember darkness still surrounds us, but be aware of how the little, feeble flame chases away the dark. In the glow of candles, there are friends, brothers and sisters to be seen, not stranger and enemies. We are called into the One True Light.

Yes, this is a night for tradition, and many things are changed in our tradition this year. It is a time for us to reclaim the child in us and to see with awe the inbreaking kingdom of God. This is a night for children! May we hold them close and join in their expectant exuberance!

God has scattered himself among us as a precious treasure! It was a choice, a plan, a hope poured out so we might know the riches of God's embrace and love. May we proclaim the beauty and wonder of God, born a child among us. Company has come!

With love and joy,

Marcus

**Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Community Worship Service
Christmas Eve – Nativity of our Lord
December 24th, 2020**

7:30 P.M. Livestream link: https://youtu.be/MBqpQ0X_fvg

ENTRANCE

ORGAN PRELUDE

Of the Father's Love Begotten arr. Charles Callahan
Three Settings of Silent Night arr. Charles Callahan

GREETING

*Good news! Unspeakable joy!
**A great light has burst forth,
overcoming the darkness!**
A child is born for us—a son has been given!
**Bringing a kingdom of endless peace,
we shall call him Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God!**
Come, let us see what God has brought us!
Let us see what the Lord has done!
Glory to God in the highest!
And on earth, peace and goodwill to all!*

HYMN #234

O Come, All Ye Faithful (Stanzas 1-3)
Located in the back of the bulletin - (Printed w/ permission)

OPENING PRAYER

***Holy One,
you have appeared in the flesh,
bringing redemption to all,
your glory is made known in this newborn child,
this living, blessed hope.
Tonight we sing a new song—
a song of justice, righteousness, and endless peace.
Gift of God, beautiful Christ-child,
we welcome you!
Let love be born anew in our hearts
on this joyous night. Amen.***

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE (Dodson Family)

(Light the candles of hope, peace, joy and love.)

Reader 1: *Hear these words from the first chapter of the gospel of John:*

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God and all things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being. What came into being with him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it. . . And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."

(As the following is being read, one person lights the white Christ candle.)

Reader 2: *This night, we come to the end of our Advent journey. We have discovered light along the way, symbolized in the light of our Advent candles, the light of hope, the light of peace, the light of joy, the light of love.*

Reader 3: *We gather tonight to acknowledge and proclaim that the fullness of God's Light has come again into our dark world. A child has been born. His name is Jesus. And he lives with us, even now!*

Reader 4: *May his light shine in all the dark places of our world and in the dark places of our souls to fulfill hope, bring peace, restore joy and wrap each of us in love that is pure and everlasting.*

Reader 5: *Tonight, we light the Christ candle and we say, welcome Jesus! As God's people together, let us pray the Christmas prayer:*

O God, gracious and holy,

By the birth of your holy child Jesus, you have given us a great light to dawn on our darkness.

Grant that we may welcome the light, absorb it and reflect it to a dark world.

Bestow upon us the most excellent Christmas gift of love

that we may love all people as you love each of us.

May the likeness of your Son be formed in us that we may bear

***the ever-brightening hope of your presence with us,
now and forevermore. Amen.***

Proclamation and Response

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Isaiah 9:2-7

- 9:2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined.
- 9:3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.
- 9:4 For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.
- 9:5 For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
- 9:6 For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- 9:7 His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Psalm 96 (*Please read responsively the text in bold*)

- 96:1 O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.
- 96:2 Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.**
- 96:3 Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.
- 96:4 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.**
- 96:5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.
- 96:6 Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.**
- 96:7 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
- 96:8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.**
- 96:9 Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.
- 96:10 Say among the nations, "The LORD is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity."**

- 96:11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
- 96:12 let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy
- 96:13 before the LORD; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.**

Titus 2:11-14

- 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all,
- 2:12 training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly,
- 2:13 while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.
- 2:14 He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Luke 2:1-20

- 2:1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.
- 2:2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.
- 2:3 All went to their own towns to be registered.
- 2:4 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.
- 2:5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.
- 2:6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.
- 2:7 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.
- 2:8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.
- 2:9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.
- 2:10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see--I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:
- 2:11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

- 2:12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."
- 2:13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
- 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"
- 2:15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."
- 2:16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.
- 2:17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child;
- 2:18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.
- 2:19 But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.
- 2:20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

L: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

P: Thanks be to God!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

***Lord, we have lived far too long
in dark places of our own making.
We have walled ourselves in,
shut the world out,
and held ourselves captive
to our fear and failings.
Free us from this place, Lord.
Return us to a life in your presence,
where we may face the trials of this world
with you by our side.
Restore your light to our eyes,
that we may behold anew
your love in our lives.
Hear us and help us, we pray.
We wait in eager anticipation,
for the glory of your salvation this night. Amen.***

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

*Rejoice and be glad:
Your burdens are lifted, your captivity is ended!
The Lord's great light pierces the darkness:
breaching the walls of our prisons,
revealing the way of true freedom.
Light, love, and salvation have come to us this night.
Christ is born, and with Christ, we are born anew!
Amen.*

SOLO

INFANT HOLY, INFANT LOWLY

HOMILY

STATEMENT OF FAITH *(The United Church of Canada)*

*We are not alone; we live in God's world.
We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others
by the Spirit.
We trust in God.
We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to live with
respect in Creation, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.
In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone.
Thanks be to God! Amen.*

GLORIA PATRI (UMH #70)

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the
beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.*

Sending Forth

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES &

HYMN #239

Silent Night

(all verses & located in the back of the bulletin)

*(Candles will be lit at this time. The ushers will bring the light to you. Please keep
burning wicks upright. Tip only the unlighted candles. Enjoy the symbolism and
bask in the glow of candlelight, but please be careful and respectful of the church's
furnishings.)*

WITNESS TO THE LIGHT

A child has been born for us.

God's grace has been given to us.

From a stable in Bethlehem our savior has come.

*We have seen the glory of the Lord,
revealed in the face of the Christ child.*

We can hardly contain our amazement.

Tell the world. Treasure the story.

Ponder it in your heart.

***We will Glorify and praise God,
for all we have heard and seen!***

Rejoice! Rejoice! Christ has come!

Amen!

CLOSING HYMN #230

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Located in the back of the bulletin - (Printed with permission)

BENEDICTION

CHORAL CLOSING HYMN #251

Refrain Only: Go Tell it on the Mountain

Please extinguish candles.

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O Come, All Ye Faithful

1. O come, all ye faith-ful, joy-ful and tri-um-phant, O
 1. *A - des - te, fi - de - les, lae - ti tri - um - phan - tes; ve -*
 2. True God of true God, Light from Light E - ter - nal,
 3. Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion; O
 * 4. See how the shep-herds, sum-moned to his cra - dle,

come ye, O come ye, to Beth - le - hem.
ni - te, ve - ni - te in Beth - le - hem.
 lo, he shuns not the Vir - gin's womb;
 sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heaven a - bove!
 leav - ing their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;

Come and be - hold him, born the King of an - gels;
Na - tum vi - de - te Re - gem an - ge - lor - um.
 Son of the Fa - ther, be - got - ten, not cre - at - ed;
 Glo - ry to God, all glo - ry in the high - est;
 we too will thith - er bend our joy - ful foot - steps;

Refrain
 O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him,
Ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus, ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus,

O come, let us a - dore him, Christ the Lord.
ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus, Do - mi - num.

Silent Night, Holy Night

239

1. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, all is calm, all is bright
 1. *Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht! Al - les schläft, ein - sam wacht*
 2. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, shep-herds quake at the sight;
 3. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Son of God, love's pure light;
 4. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, won-drous star, lend thy light;

round yon vir - gin moth-er and child. Ho - ly in-fant, so ten-der and mild,
nur das trau-te hoch - hei - li - ge Paar, Hold-er Kna-be mit lock-i-gem Haar,
 glo-ries stream from heav-en a-far, heav-en-ly hosts sing Al - le - lu - ia!
 ra-diant beams from thy ho - ly face with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace,
 with the an - gels let us sing, Al - le - lu - ia to our King;

sleep in heav - en - ly peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
schlaf im himm - li - scher Ruh, schlaf im himm - li - scher Ruh.
 Christ the Sav - ior is born, Christ the Sav - ior is born!
 Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth, Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth.
 Christ the Sav - ior is born, Christ the Sav - ior is born!

WORDS: Joseph Mohr, 1818, alt.; sts. 1, 2, 3 trans. by John F. Young;
 st. 4 trans. anon. (Lk. 2:6-20)
 MUSIC: Franz Gruber, 1818

STILLE NACHT
 Irr.

HYMN #230

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie;
above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.

Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary,
and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.

O morning stars together,
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the king,
and peace to all on earth!

How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is given;
so God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in,
be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel!

HYMN #251

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

Refrain (only, sing twice):

Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain,
that Jesus Christ is born.