ZION'S REFORMED UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CHRISTMAS EVE 2020 at 7:00 p.m. A FAMILY CAROLS AND CANDELIGHT SERVICE

Welcome to this virtual Christmas Eve Service. Families are encouraged to have candles on hand to join in with the candle lighting and all are encouraged to sing so that together we may light up the night with joy and fellowship.

THE PRELUDE "Joy to the World/For Unto Us a Child is Born" G. F. Handel, arr. Ronn Huff

OPENING PRAYER

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. (Isaiah 9)

Sing "O Come All Ye Faithful" (bulletin page 5)

BETHLEHEM

But you, O Bethlehem are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf. The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies until the woman in labor gives birth. Then at last his fellow countrymen will return from exile to their own land. And he will stand to lead his flock with the LORD's strength, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. Then his people will live there undisturbed, for he will be highly honored around the world. And he will be the source of peace. (Micah 5)

Sing "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (bulletin page 6)

THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH (Luke 2)

And it came to pass that a proclamation was issued by Caesar Augustus that a census should be taken. And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph 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. (*Light the Joseph candle.*)

He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. (*Light the Mary candle.*)

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to a son, whom they named Jesus. (Light the Christ candle.)

She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Sing "Away in a Manger" (bulletin page 7)

THE SHEPHERDS (Luke 2)

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. (Light the shepherd candles.)

Sing "The First Nowell" (bulletin page 8)

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to them (light the tallest angel candle as narrator continues),

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 of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

(light all of the angel candles as narrator continues) And suddenly a great company of heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Sing "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" (bulletin page 9)

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.

Sing "Go Tell It on the Mountain" (bulletin page 10)

THE WISE MEN

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have come to worship him." (Light the wise men candles.)

The star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw Jesus with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, incense and myrrh.

OFFERING OUR GIFTS

Our invitation to the offering is a quote by Dale Evans, wife of Roy Rogers: "Christmas, my child, is love in action. Every time we love, every time we give, it's Christmas." May your giving reflect the love and joy of this night.

Special Music "Mary, Did You Know?"

Ruth Herrick, Soloist

ANOTHER DAY

Then, having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, the wise men returned to their country by another route. (Extinguish the wise men candles.)

And the shepherds returned to their work, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen. (Extinguish the shepherd candles.)

And the angels returned to heaven. (Extinguish the angel candles.)

And many years later, Mary and Joseph, being flesh and bone, came to the end of their lives on earth. (Extinguish the Mary and Joseph candles.)

THE LIGHT SHINES

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. (John 1)

But the Light that began in Bethlehem was life. And this life, Jesus Christ, was the Light of all humanity. The light still shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out. And it all began on a silent, holy night . . . long ago . . .

Close by singing "Silent Night" (bulletin page 11)

*A PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS (by Robert Louis Stevenson)

Loving Father, Help us remember the birth of Jesus that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and 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 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 your children, and Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

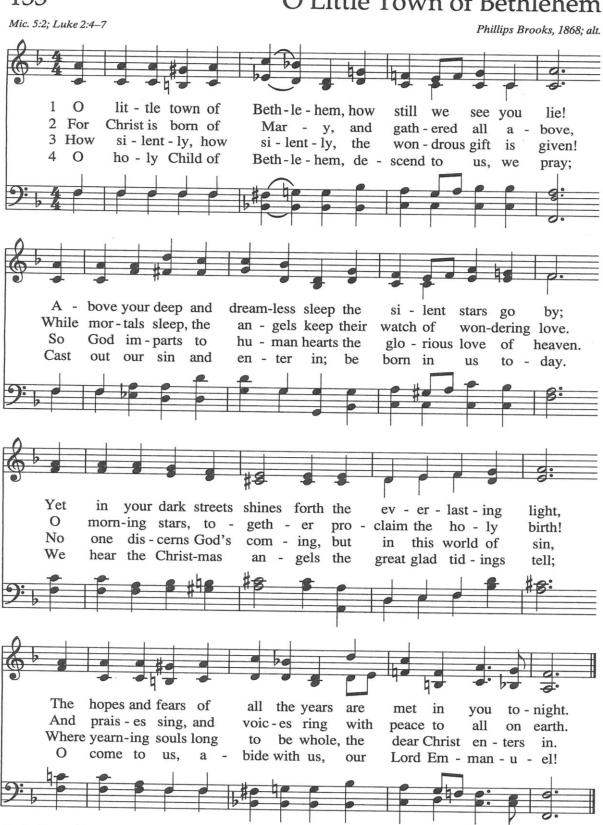


Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

*O Come, All Ye Faithful



O Little Town of Bethlehem



Anon., United States, 1885; st. 3, 1892; alt.

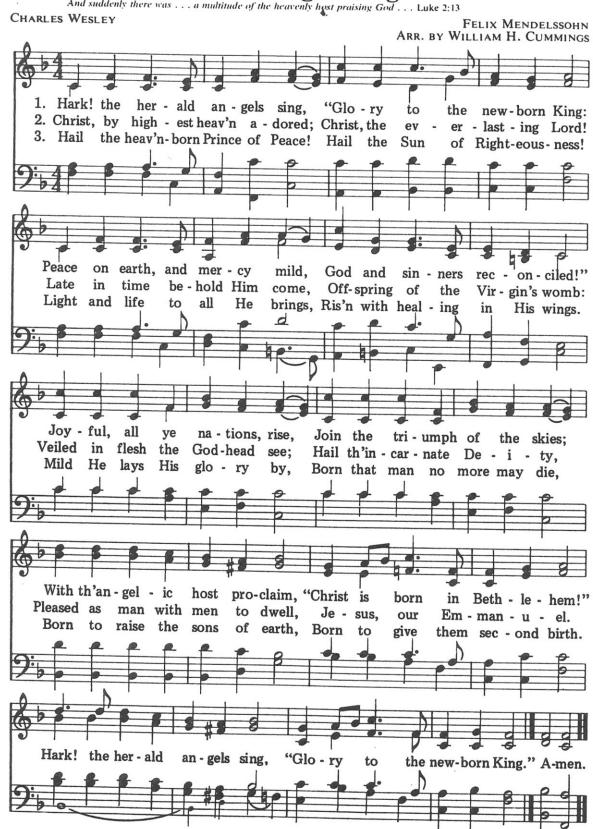
Luke 2:7



The First Nowell



Hark! the Herald Angels Sing
And suddenly there was . . . a multitude of the heavenly host praising God . . . Luke 2:13



Go, Tell It on the Mountain

