



An Agape Liturgy for the
FEAST OF THE NATIVITY

4:30 p.m.

December 24, 2020

Gathering: Liturgy of the Word

Prelude

“O Come, Little Children”

Dale Wood

Opening Hymn

#83 O Come, All Ye Faithful

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 heaven above;
Glory to God, 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!

Opening Rite: Lighting of the Advent Wreath

All stand, and the Officiant greets the people with these words:

Officiant: Dear friends in Christ, we have traveled far following the herald of the angels in the night sky. Jesus has been born again in us. Come let us adore him tonight in song, story, and prayer. We are tired, we are weary, and this is the place of rest, in the cold, in the night, with the animals. Come and ask once again where is our savior, our tiny little one and how can we help him to grow in our hearts? *Amen.*

Silence may be kept for a time.

Officiant: For each of the days of Advent we have lit a candle: HOPE, PEACE, JOY, and LOVE. Tonight, we complete the circle by lighting the middle candle, the Christ light. (*The candle is now lit.*) O come let us adore him this night. Help us to let the Christ light grow within us, so when You come again to meet us we are found watching and waiting. Remember what was foretold by the prophet Isaiah: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” Isaiah 9:2

Officiant: Open my eyes this day, dear Lord, to see your light in the world. Accompany me, so that I may walk faithfully and share the light of your love with others. *Amen.*

(Daily Prayer for All Seasons, p.21)

The Greeting

Officiant: O come, all ye faithful.

People: Come, let us adore him.

Collect for Purity

Officiant: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open,

People: all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Hymn of Praise “Christ Child Lullaby” The Joseph Family

Officiant: Let us glorify the Holy One as we say:

People: O Light of the world, first-born of creation, radiance of glory, light from light begotten; God self-revealing, holy, bright and blessed, you shine upon us. Day’s light is fleeting, your light is eternal, and we look to you our light within the shadow. We sing to you O Creator, Christ and Spirit, you shine before us. Light of the world, O Jesus Christ, we bless you; giver of life and

Child of God, we praise you. Here with us the universe proclaims your glory, as you shine among us. *Amen.*

The Collect of the Day

Officiant: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Officiant: Let us pray: O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

The Readings

The First Reading: Isaiah 9:2–7

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.
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.
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.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
For a child has been born for us,
son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
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.

Lector: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

The Response: Psalm 96

- 1 Sing to the LORD a new song; *
sing to the LORD, all the whole earth.
- 2 Sing to the LORD and bless his Name; *
proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day.
- 3 Declare his glory among the nations *
and his wonders among all peoples.
- 4 For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; *
he is more to be feared than all gods.
- 5 As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols; *
but it is the LORD who made the heavens.
- 6 Oh, the majesty and magnificence of his presence! *
Oh, the power and the splendor of his sanctuary!
- 7 Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples; *
ascribe to the LORD honor and power.
- 8 Ascribe to the LORD the honor due his Name; *
bring offerings and come into his courts.
- 9 Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; *
let the whole earth tremble before him.
- 10 Tell it out among the nations: "The LORD is King! *
he has made the world so firm that it cannot be moved;

he will judge the peoples with equity.”

- 11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it; *
let the field be joyful and all that is therein.
- 12 Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy
before the LORD when he comes, *
when he comes to judge the earth.
- 13 He will judge the world with righteousness *
and the peoples with his truth.

The Epistle: Titus 2:11–14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. 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.

Lector: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Hymn “Christmas Come” The Joseph Family

The Gospel: Luke 2:1–14



Officiant: The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ
according to St. Luke.

People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to 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 whom 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.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

Officiant: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Sermon

Rev. Annette Joseph

Affirmation of Faith

Originally the entire service was viewed as our confession of faith. Since the sixth century, however, the church has recited either the Nicene Creed or the Apostle’s Creed at the Eucharist. In more recent times, revised affirmations, retellings of the original creeds, have been used as part of the pattern for worship in the Episcopal Church. The Advent Affirmation of Faith draws from the scriptural depictions of God’s action in the world and the life and ministry of Jesus our Savior.

Officiant: Let us affirm our hope in Christ our Light.

People: We believe in God,
whose love is the source of all life and the desire of
our lives, whose love was given a human face in Jesus
of Nazareth, whose love was crucified by the evil that

seeks to enslave us all, and whose love, defeating even death, is our glorious promise of freedom.

Therefore,

though we are sometimes fearful and doubting, we trust in God; and, in the Name of Jesus Christ, we commit ourselves, in the service of others, to seek justice and to live in peace, to care for the earth and to share in the commonwealth of God's goodness, to live in the freedom of forgiveness and the power of the Spirit of love;

And in company of the faithful, to be the Church,
for the glory of God. *Amen.*

The Prayers of the People

Officiant: As we come to the stable to adore the newborn Jesus, who was heralded in by sheep, cows, and donkeys. May we remember this humble entry and humble our hearts to find you room.

A member of the community leads the Prayers of the People.

Leader: Wonderful Counselor, please be with those who take counsel for your church, we pray especially for Deon, our bishop, and Annette, our rector. Empower us to remember the sacred trust which has been given to us this night and every night. Come, all ye faithful:

People: Come, let us adore him.

Leader: Mighty God, may the rulers of this world remember you came this night not in might, but to a humble stable with poor refugee parents fleeing from the powers of this earth. Help them to look for the poor, the least, and the struggling in everything they do. Come, all ye faithful:

People: Come, let us adore him.

Leader: Tonight we lift up to you the sick, homeless, the stranger in our land. So much of legend is in young far away travelers coming to you and finding healing and

wholeness. We pray especially for those we lift up to you in heart and voice.

Silence is kept for a time.

Leader: Come, all ye faithful:

People: Come, let us adore him.

Leader: We give you thanks for all the blessings of this life. For the wonder of the night sky, for the glory of your care, and for those lifted in heart and voice.

Silence is kept for a time.

Leader: Come, all ye faithful:

People: Come, let us adore him.

Leader: We pray for those who are in our memories this night. For those who have gone to be with you in your kingdom. May they rest in peace and rise in glory, especially those we name now...

Silence is kept for a time.

Leader: Come, all ye faithful:

People: Come, let us adore him.

Leader: Prince of Peace, enter into our hearts and minds this Christmas, so we may once again receive you as Emmanuel, God with us. *Amen.*

Officiant: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

The Confession

(Adapted from Ps.108; *Daily Prayer for all Seasons* p.35, Confession and Assurance)

Officiant: Word of God,

People: we confess that we need your wholeness. We have often looked to outward gifts and measures when what we need is your love in our hearts. We have often aimed toward what we can achieve or where we stand in relation to others, when what we desire is the integrity your love bestows. We confess our need for your illumination. Be

our light, O Christ.

An assurance of pardon:

Officiant: God forgives all our sins and heals all our infirmities. God lifts us from the low places and sets mercy and love upon us. God fills us with goodness and renews our lives.

People: Thanks be to God.

The Lord's Prayer

Officiant: Let us pray in the way that Christ taught us:

People: 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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Agape

While sharing a common Eucharistic celebration is not possible at this time, this liturgy expresses our longing for a time when we can once more share and gather together at the Eucharistic table. This practice of giving thanks for bread, wine and food is ancient, going back to the hospitality our ancestor Abraham showed to his visitors. While not the full celebration of the Holy Eucharist, there is a relationship, in much the same way that giving thanks over water is a reminder of our Baptism.

The Officiant and people give thanks for the gift of wine.

Officiant: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe.

People: You create the fruit of the vine; we long for the day when you will once again refresh us with the cup of salvation in the Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Glory to you for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Officiant and people give thanks for the gift of our daily bread.

Officiant: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe.

People: You bring forth bread from the earth; we long for the day when we may once again partake of the bread of life the Body of your Son Jesus Christ. As grain scattered upon the earth is gathered into one loaf, so gather your Church in every place into the kingdom of your Son. To you be glory and power forever and ever. **Amen.**

The Officiant and people give thanks for the gift of food.

Officiant: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe.

People: You have blessed the earth to bring forth food to satisfy our hunger. Let this food strengthen us in the Eucharistic fast that is before us, that following our Savior in the way of the cross, we may come to the joy of his resurrection. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Thanksgiving

Officiant: God of all creation, we gather on this holy night of promise we gather to adore the Christ child entering our world. In the waters of baptism we were buried with him so that we might also rise with him and so share his victory over sin and death.

People: You have transformed our lives into the living stones that form your Church with Christ as the foundation stone. Strengthen our community's bond of communion and peace and deepen our solidarity with your Church throughout the world.

Officiant: Rekindle within us this Christmas night the vision of

your kingdom so that our daily concerns and labor may find their proper perspective.

People: Fill our homes with the spirit of the Gospel and give us the grace to see the face of Christ in the people with whom we live. We raise our voices in praise and thanksgiving to you, O God; that we who have celebrated Christ's resurrection this day share in his eternal glory where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. ***Amen.***

The Peace

The Peace is exchanged.

Officiant: The peace of Christ be always with you.

People: And also with you.

We greet each other in the name of the risen Christ.

Here at Christ Church, we consider gratitude and generosity to be spiritual disciplines. While we can't be together to pass the collection plate to one another in church at this time, we encourage you to offer your gifts and service in any way that makes the most sense to you.

[Click here](#) to contribute to our ongoing ministry by donating online.

Final Hymn

#111 Silent 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 *Allelusia!*
Christ the Savior is born,

Christ the Savior is born!
Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, loves pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

The Sending

Officiant: We have lit these candles as symbols of our faith in the coming of Christ among us. Faith that God sees us and meets us even in the messiness of life. We now embody Christ's living flame. Let us be the light to a world in need of light, that we may be guided to Emmanuel, God with us, once more. *Amen.*

The Advent candles are now extinguished.

Officiant: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. *Amen.*

Officiant: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

“He Is Born”

Douglas Wagner

A simple meal may now be shared.

