

PRELUDE

Away in a Manger
Gesu Bambino

arr. Stephen McNeff
arr. Arthur Frackenpohl

The First Church Brass Quintet

WELCOME

CANDLE LIGHTING LITANY

The Cox Family

One: Throughout the season of Advent, we have anticipated Emmanuel – God with us. We have watched and waited, trusting that God has promised salvation to all who walk in the light.

All: The preceding days of spiritual preparation have brought us to this present time and place. Now salvation draws even nearer!

[The congregation will pause to allow time for candle lighting.]

UNISON PRAYER

For a child has been born for us, a son is given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Creator, 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. Amen!

RESPONSE (HYMN 128)

CRADLE SONG

One Candle Is Lit (verse 5)

Come, listen, the sounds of God with us ring clear,
And signs of a cross in the distance appear.
The Word once made flesh, yet the Word ever near.
One candle is lit for the Christ birthday here.

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†CALL TO WORSHIP

One: God loves us while we are becoming our best selves.

Many: So we pray with patient hope!

One: God loves us in the midst of much strife and conflict.

Many: So we pray for the strength to bring peace!

One: God loves us when we are weeping and worried.

Many: So we pray to bring God’s vision of joy to fruition!

One: Love is God’s greatest gift to us.

Many: Love is a sacred vow God has made to us – a rainbow in the sky, a baby in the manger!

† Please stand in body or spirit as you are able.

†HYMN 148

O Come, All Ye Faithful

ADESTE FIDELES

†OPENING PRAYER

Creator God, this night is for mystery. We do not fully understand the ways you break into this world and into our lives. Yet we are certain that you do. The whole wide world still needs your peace – people are in conflict and the environment is in peril. May the ancient story of your arrival fill us with courage that we might carry the good news of great joy. We pray for the sake of all creation. Amen.

PASTORAL PREAMBLE

THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS IN SCRIPTURE AND SONG

To the City of David Called Bethlehem

Scripture Luke 2:1-5

Song 153 It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

CAROL

Wrapped Him in Bands of Cloth

Scripture Luke 2:6-7

On Christmas Night

The First Church Choir

arr. Ralph Vaughn Williams

An Angel of the Lord Stood Before Them

Scripture Luke 2:8-14

Song 150 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

MENDELSSOHN

All Who Heard It Were Amazed

Scripture Luke 2:15-20

Angels Sing Above the Stable

The First Church Choir

J. William Greene

Wise Ones from the East Came to Jerusalem

Scripture Matthew 2:1-11

Song 173 As with Gladness

DIX

PASTORAL PRAYER

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments following the service!

CALL TO OFFERING

As it appeared in ancient fields long ago, the mystery of God’s glory shines around us again this evening. Like the angels of old, let us share good news. Like the wise ones, let us offer our gifts in tribute. May the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice.

OFFERTORY *O Holy Night* Adolphe Adams
The First Church Choir

†RESPONSE (HYMN 134) [Emmanuel, Emmanuel](#) MCGEE
Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel.
God with us, revealed in us, his name is called Emmanuel.
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†OFFERTORY PRAYER
Love and Light of the world, we give you thanks for your example of generosity. We give you thanks for the ability to share your divine love with others in tangible ways. Help us to remember, as we await the birth of Christ, to give more than we receive, knowing that we will always experience abundance in your love. Amen.

WELCOMING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

RESPONSIVE LITANY

One: We light the Christ candle! We rejoice as God’s people! The light has come into the world!

[The congregation will pause for candle lighting and circulation.
When everyone has received the light, the litany continues.]

Many: **O God, with the company of heaven and with sounds of great joy, you come to us. This is an evening of love and light.**

One: John declared that this great light is Christ -- the Word made flesh.

Many: **This great light lives among us. By this light we behold God's glory full of grace and truth. At the birth of Jesus, we now rejoice. Creator God, thank you for coming to us this day. Thank you for touching all heaven and earth with goodness. In every corner of the world -- in every corner of our being -- shine with your hope, peace, joy, and love. Amen!**

† *Please stand in body or spirit as you are able.*

HYMN 145 [Silent Night, Holy Night](#) STILLE NACHT

†SENDING SENTENCES
One: In the beginning, the Word was present with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through the Word. In the Word was life, and that life was the light of all people – a light that shines endlessly.
All: **We go forth now to witness the Word, to the light and love of Jesus, and to Emmanuel – God with us. We go forth from this place to live in God’s glory and grace!**

†HYMN 143 [Joy to the World](#) ANTIOCH

POSTLUDE *In dulci Jubilo* J. S. Bach

Tonight, the First Church Brass Quintet consists of:
Jeff Albright, Jon Noyes, trumpets, William Shea, horn
Chris Schrock, trombone; David Winer, tuba