



7:00 pm, December 24, 2020  
1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian of Rockaway  
Join Zoom Worship (login beginning at 12 Noon EDT)

<https://zoom.us/join>

Phone in: (mobile or home phone) +1 929 205 6099 US (New York)  
Meeting ID: 742 347 8806 Passcode: 6562894  
+19292056099,7423478806#, 0#,6562894# US (New York)

PRELUDE            “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”            Traditional  
Arrangement by Jim Brickman

#### LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT AND CHRIST CANDLE

Immanuel, God-with-us, we light the candle of hope.

**May your light shine!** *(First advent candle is lit.)*

Immanuel, God-with-us, we light the candle of peace.

**May your light shine!** *(Second advent candle is lit.)*

Immanuel, God-with-us, we light the candle of joy.

**May your light shine!** *(Third advent candle is lit.)*

Immanuel, God-with-us, we light the candle of love. *(Fourth advent candle is lit.)*

Immanuel, God-with-us,

Your gifts of hope, peace, joy and love are born this night,

**May your light shine! Amen.** *(Center Christ candle is lit.)*

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

On this holiest of nights,

**we come, joining the shepherds  
who are stunned by wonder.**

On this most silent night,

**we come, our hopes and dreams  
joining those of Mary and Joseph.**

On this nights of carols and candlelight,

**we come, our glad songs joining  
with the choirs of angels over us.**

## **SPECIAL MUSIC**

### **“O Holy Night”**

Words by John Sullivan Dwight  
Music by Adolphe Charles Adam

Soprano: Molly Young  
Piano: Micah Young

## **PRAYER**

**Glorious God, on this Christmas Eve, we sing beloved carols of Bethlehem, of shepherds and angels, of Mary and Joseph, and the infant Jesus, our Savior. Is there yet a new song we can sing to you? A song to be learned from the heavens and the earth: where the roar of the sea the exultation of the fields, and the joy of the trees are already raised in a chorus of glad rejoicing, ready to welcome you. Even if no ear may hear your coming, help us hear the music of creation. Then, with the whole cosmos, we will sing of your salvation, declare your glory, and in a crescendo of praise, bless your name: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace!  
Amen.**

## **HYMN 133**

### **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, choir of angels; sing in exultation;  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, all 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!**

**Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!  
O come, let us adore him; O come, let us adore him;  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**

## **INVITATION TO CONFESSION**

We are invited to come, to sing, to adore the child. We are easily distracted and forget who is in the manger. Love is in the manger, love that comes from God to us in all our failures and mistakes. So we can confess who we are to the God who loves us. Let us pray together.

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION** *(Rev. Chip Hardwick)*

**Lord Jesus Christ, you are loving and merciful. Forgive us for being so captivated by Christmas that we forget that you, the little baby in the manger, grew up as the Lord over all creation. It is sometimes easier to leave you in the manger than it is to reckon with your difficult teachings and fierce challenges. So often we do not follow these teachings, and we do not live up to your challenges. We need your grace and your strength to follow you more closely. Forgive us for all of our sins, as we continue to pray in silence...**

***Silent prayer***

**In Jesus' name, Amen.**

### **ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

God's love knows no bounds. Love comes down at Christmas—  
a love so deep and so profound that nothing will ever be the same again.  
Know that this love is come for us— to touch us, to heal us, to forgive us,  
to make us whole.

**Thanks be to God!**

### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**God, we see your light shining in the darkness. We hear the Christmas Angels. We behold your promises fulfilled in the birth of this wondrous child. May we hear these words and may our hearts be stirred by the stories they tell. Amen.**

### **CHOIR ANTHEM "In the Bleak Midwinter"**

Words by Christina G. Rossetti

Music by Gustave Holst

Arranged by Albin C. Whitworth

Soloist: Shelley McConnell

### **SCRIPTURE READINGS**

#### **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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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

O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

**<sup>2</sup> Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.**

<sup>3</sup> Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.

**<sup>4</sup> For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.**

<sup>5</sup> For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

**<sup>6</sup> Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.**

<sup>7</sup> Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

**<sup>8</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.**

<sup>9</sup> Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

**<sup>10</sup> 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."**

<sup>11</sup> Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

**<sup>12</sup> let the field exult, and everything in it.**

**Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy**

<sup>13</sup> 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.

## LUKE 2:1-20

**2** In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> 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: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

<sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had

been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

## **SERMON**

## **IN THE LAND OF DEEP DARKNESS**

### **HYMN 144**

### **IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER**

**In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan;  
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.**

**Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;  
Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign:  
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed  
The Lord God incarnate, Jesus Christ.**

**Angels and archangels may have gathered there;  
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;  
But his mother only, in her maiden bliss,  
Worshiped the beloved with a kiss.**

**What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;  
Yet what I can I give him: give my heart.**

### **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** *(Rev. Bruce Brewer)*

**I believe in God whose light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness can never smother it.  
I believe that on a night like this night in Bethlehem  
there was born a Saviour,  
who is Christ the Lord.  
I believe in the Word who has become incarnate, our very flesh and blood,  
yet full of grace and truth.  
I believe in the blessed appearing of the salvation of our God,  
that is for the happiness of all people.  
I believe in his name as Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of peace;  
Of the increase of his rule and of his unique peace,  
there will be no end.  
The zeal of the God of hosts will do this.  
This I surely believe!**

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

God of life, God of new life, by the birth of Jesus  
you have brought light into our darkness.

Shine in our lives. Christ Jesus, by your coming,

**Set us free to live and work for your peace.**

God of life, God of new life, nothing will ever separate us from your love.

Give us faith to trust your promise. Christ Jesus, by your coming,

**Set us free to live and work for your peace.**

God of life, God of new life, you call us to serve the hungry, the poor,  
the lonely and the outcast. Show us how we can respond.

Christ Jesus, by your coming,

**Set us free to live and work for your peace.**

God of life, God of new life,

Jesus was born into poverty and lived under oppression.

Open our eyes to injustice, and inspire us to proclaim your reign.

Christ Jesus, by your coming,

**Set us free to live and work for your peace.**

God of life, God of new life, by the birth of Jesus,

bring your healing to those in need, especially those affected by the pandemic.

Give strength and hope to medical personnel and to families and friends.

Christ Jesus, by your coming,

**Set us free to live and work for your peace.**

God of life, God of new life, inspire this congregation to reach out beyond itself,  
beyond fears, beyond distractions. Help us to welcome your future.

Christ Jesus, by your coming,

**Set us free to live and work for your peace.**

God of life, God of new life, by the birth of Jesus

you have brought light into our darkness. Shine in our lives.

Christ Jesus, by your coming,

**Set us free to live and work for your peace.**

We pray in the name of Jesus, our light, our life, and our hope.

**Amen.**

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**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 debts, as we forgive our debtors, and  
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the  
kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**HYMN 122**

**SILENT NIGHT** *(You may light a candle as we sing 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: Alleluia;  
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.**

**Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light  
Radiant beams from Thy holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace.  
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.**

**Silent night, holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light;  
With the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King;  
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.**

**CHOIR ANTHEM**

**“Amen, Go Tell It!”**

Traditional Spirituals

Arranged and with new words and music by Donald Moore

Soloist: Bonnie Pomeroy

**LITANY OF BENEDICTION**

It has been done! The News has been shared!

**A young maiden will bear a child, and she will call him Jesus.**

But that is the beginning of the story, a story that has not yet ended.

**A story that includes us, a story of which we are a part.**

So we go out to live the story,

**to tell of the Hope that is being born among us this Christmas,**

**to share the Love of the season with the world,**

**to be agents of Peace in times of trouble,**

**to sing songs of deep and abiding Joy.**

As you go, may God go with you, challenging us to respond God's Call  
in ways that are new, unexpected and a little unsettling.

And as Tiny Tim said so very well...

God Bless Us Every One. Amen.

**POSTLUDE**

**“Joy to the World”**

Music by George Frederick Handel

Arranged by Philip Wesley