

PRELUDE Meghan Jones, violin & Natalie Helm, cello

ANTHEM *Climb To the Top of the Highest Mountain* Carolyn Jennings

WELCOME

\*CAROL *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;**

*Refrain:* **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 heav'n above:  
"Glory to God, all glory in the highest!" (*Refrain*)**

**Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n;  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing; (*Refrain*)**

\*OPENING PRAYER

**Gracious God, like Mary and Joseph, we know what it is like to be on a journey not of our own choosing. The last few years have sent us in directions we couldn't anticipate and destinations we'd never wanted to visit. The pandemic, discrimination, violence, pain, and grief are woven into our stories in ways we are trying to wrap our heads and hearts around. Meet us, O God, in our wounds and wants. Meet us, we pray, O God, in our heartfelt, honest hopes. We pause for a moment to soak in the sacredness of this silent night.**

*Silence*

**We carry our prayers like a precious infant; we hold our faith fragile like a ceramic nativity set. We long to make room for You, O God, in our lives. At the same time, we know that Your ways are not our ways. We pause again to prepare our hearts to hear how You decided a barn was the best place to enter the world and shepherds the best ones to share the good news of great joy. Like Mary, O God, help us ponder prayerfully as we hear again the story that changes everything. Help us to behold and to be held by a truth that is bigger, bolder, and braver than any other truth we've ever encountered. Guide us, O God, to that perfect, pure light of Your hope, peace, joy, and love born in Jesus our Christ on this night. Amen.**

\*GLORIA *Angels We Have Heard on High*

**Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come adore on bended knee, Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.  
Glo-ri-a in excelsis Deo, Glo-ri-a in excelsis Deo.**

ENTER THE STORY

Luke 2:1-4

Olivia Bixby

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.

SINGING THE STORY

*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.**

DIVING DEEPER INTO THE STORY

Luke 2:5-7

Olivia Bixby

<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.

SINGING THE STORY

*What Child Is This*

*(We invite all children to the back of the sanctuary to help with processing the creche)*

**What child is this, who laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the son of Mary.**

**So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh, come peasant, king, to own Him:  
The King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone Him.  
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the son of Mary.**

PROCESSING the CRECHE

*Away in the Manger*

LIGHTING the CHRIST CANDLE

ANTHEM

*Candlelight Carol*

John Rutter

HOLDING & BEHOLDING GOD'S GLORY

Luke 2:8-19

James Mayer

<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.

ANTHEM

*Before the Marvel of This Night*

Carl Schalk

SERMON

*The Poetry of Tonight*

SOLO

*O Holy Night*  
Lauren Patsos, Soprano

\*CAROL

*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; heav'nly 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.**

PASTORAL PRAYER & 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.**

\*LITANY of ADORATION

One: We have experienced a truth tonight that shapes our souls and reminds us of who and whose we are.

Many: **And softly a hymn begins to hum in our hearts.**

*All singing: (softly) O Come, let us adore him.*

One: We have stood speechless in the straw beholding and being held by a hope, peace, joy and love we need now more than ever.

Many: **And the hymn grows stronger with a faith moving deep within.**

*All singing: (little louder) O come, let us adore him*

One: So sing out with a full voice for all Sarasota and beyond to hear:

Many: **For God so loves the world, God enters anew and afresh in such a time as this.  
Alleluia, Alleluia, and Amen.**

*All singing: (Full voice) O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!*

\*CLOSING HYMN

*Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*

**Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King;  
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”  
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;  
With the angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”  
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”**

**Hail the heaven-born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die,  
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.  
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”**

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

*Fanfare on Hark the Herald*