



"A Community Of Many Faithing Communities Where All Belong!"

Living Waters Contemplative Life Center | Divine Intervention Ministry to the Homeless
Tippecanoe just.good.food Garden | Food Justice Site PCUSA
Arts and Science Literacy Camps for Children

Welcome To Worship

December 24, 2022

5:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve

Rev. Trish Eckert



Welcome to this time of being with God and each other.

5-5:30 pm Cookies and Carols

113 Angels We Have Heard on High
115 Away in a Manger
119 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
122 O Little Town of Bethlehem
123 It Came Upon the Midnight Clear
133 Oh Come, All Ye Faithful
134 Joy to the World
147 The First Noel

5:30 Worship “We Tell This Story”



✧Prelude

✧Welcome

We have arrived at Christmas Eve after a rich and wondrous exploration throughout the Advent season. We've reflected on the generational connections and stories that have led up to this beautiful night as we await the birth of Jesus, God among us.

As we listen to the familiar story of the holy family, let us remember all people who are seeking room at the inn. Let us recall the times we have sought or created or labored over something. Let us reflect on the moments we have said yes and followed a leading. Let us contemplate all that Mary ponders in her heart after listening to the shepherds share what they were told about this child.

✧ **Reading:** *We Tell This Story* by Rev. Sarah Speed

My heart and I have an agreement.
Every year we show up here –
here in the sanctuary,
here with the candles and the tall
ceilings,
here with the creaky church pews
and the songs of silent nights.

My heart and I have an agreement.
Every year we show up here –
at the end of the year,
after another 12 months
of humanity, of me
trying to
keep it all together,
trying to
keep my head above water,
trying to
keep up appearances.

Every year we show up here.
We drop it all.
We leave it at the door.
We come into this space
and I could swear it feels different.

Maybe it's God.
Maybe it's hope.
Maybe it's love.
But whatever it is,
I need it
every year,
so we show up here.
Tell us again the story of tonight.

My heart needs it.

✧ **Candle Lighting ~ What is your story?**

Pastor: Over a hundred people, from the ages of two to eighty years old, were asked to fill in the blank for the statement: "My story is. . ." From the voices of different generations, hear their answers:

One: Amazing!

Two: Just beginning.

Three: A wee bit messy, with lots of
love.

Four: Privileged.

One: Hopeful.

Two: Full of silliness.

Three: Still unfolding.

Four: Long, but good.

One: One of resilience.

Two: Incomplete, thank goodness.

Three: Multilingual.

Four: A work in progress.

One: My story is not just mine; it's tied
to yours.

Two: Tonight, we tell the story that we tell every year - the story of Christ's birth, the story of love made flesh. It's a story that weaves through every generation. It's a story that picks up the bits and pieces of our narrative and braids us together.

Three: So tonight, we light the Christ candle, because from generation to generation, our story belongs to God. Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.

✧ **Gathering Hymn #110 Love Came**

We tell *this* story every year. We tell this story because it illustrates so clearly God's desire to be in relationship with us. We tell this story because we, too, are invited to come to the manger and witness the miracle of birth. We tell this story because it brings us hope and good news—hope especially for those deemed powerless, unworthy, or unwelcome. We tell this story because it is a story we need to hear again and again; if we didn't tell it, what would become of our faith? And so, on this night, we tell this story to pass along this good news and to continue to thread together the generations with hope.

✧ **Prayer for Illumination**

Holy One,
we need this story—this Christmas story.
We need this story of ordinary people who were brave.
We need this story of love that changed the world.
We need this story of angel choruses that give reason to hope,
and starlight that reminds us to look up.
In a battered and bruised world,
we gather around your Word
like people gather around a fire
to warm themselves.
So we are here,
gathered together
to warm ourselves by your light,
because we need this story.
We need the truth that lies deep in these holy
words.
So today we pray:
scoop out space in us to truly listen.
Quiet our minds.
Open our hearts.
Kindle the fire.
Amen.



✧ **Bible Wisdom Teaching Luke 2: 1-20**

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!’

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.’ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

One: May we hear anew the origin stories of our faith and draw from the roots of our tradition.

All: Thanks be to our God.

✧ **Christmas Eve Reflection and Meditation - Rev. Trish Eckert**

✧ **Blessing**

In labor, may God give strength.
In danger, may God give protection.
In the wilderness, may God give presence.
In mourning, may God give companions.
In time, may God give you life anew.

✧ **Affirmation of Faith**

**We believe
that for generations
people have gathered together
on this holy night,
because there is something about this story
that speaks to the deepest parts of us.**

**We believe in bundling up this hope,
this good news, and passing it on—
to our children, to our neighbors,
to the world around us.**

**I believe my voice can make a difference,
just like I believe this story can make a difference,
so I will not stay quiet.**

**I will tell this story—of a love that makes room for all.
I will sing this story—of a love that knows our name.
I will live this story—because love has come again.**

**I believe that words have power.
I will not stay quiet.
Amen.**

✧ **Closing Blessing**

Peace to you, God-bearer, God-birther. May you create with integrity and wisdom, and may your creating connect you with all who labor to bring forth a new creation.

✧ **Closing Hymn #122 Silent Night**



Prayers, worship words, and candle lighting liturgy written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.

Blessing and Benediction written by Rev Jan L. Richardson, excerpted from her text, "Sacred Journeys: A Woman's Book of Daily Prayer."