

A Christmas Blessing & Benediction Rev. Dr. Sarah Nave

From this house of worship to yours, may you share in the gifts of this season. May joy, the gift of life with God, find you. Peace, the desire of neighbors and nations, fill you. Hope, the promise of faith, sustain you. Love, the heart of Christmas, be yours now and forever. And may a very merry Christmas be yours.

***Response: "Shalom"**

Sha rom, sha rom, mata a u hi ma de. Sha rom, sha rom, Kami no mi megumi.

(Peace, peace, until we meet again. Peace, peace, may we be blessed with grace from God.)

Sha rom, sha rom, mata a u hi ma de. Sha rom, sha rom, yuta kani, yuta kani, yuta kani.

(Peace, peace, until we meet again. Peace, peace, abundantly, abundantly, abundantly.)

Postlude

Janet Hill

We invite you to remain seated during the Postlude as we enjoy the music and God's presence together. If you need to go, please feel free to do so. Go with God's blessings.

In Appreciation:

- Greeters: Pattie Hashimoto, Gary Younglove
- Ushers: Betsy Eskridge, Irene Uno
- Parking: Carl Odell
- Parking Barriers (Sat): Neil Matsuoka
- Sound System: Lois Van Beers
- Zoom Moderator/Greeter: Lori Hart
- Altar Flowers: Lynn Yamamoto



The Celebration of Worship

December 24, 2023 • Christmas Eve - 4th Sunday of Advent

- Pastor: Rev. Dr. Sarah Nave
- Worship Leader: Phillip Chew
- Pianist: Janet Hill
- Choir Conductor: Ben Pryor
- Japanese Reader: Michael Wright
- Advent Candle Lighters: Jennifer and Emi Nishizaki-Ngo, Clifford, Megan, and Kaya Toyama

Centering Prayer for Advent

Glorious God, we gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus, and to share in the song of angels, and the glad excitement of the shepherds. Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clean hearts. May the Christmas season make us happy to be your children, and cause us to live with grateful thoughts, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

- adapted from *Christmas Prayer* by Robert Louis Stevenson

Prelude

Janet Hill

***Introit**

All: Make us one, Lord, make us one. Holy Spirit make us one. Let Your love flow so the world will know, we are one in You.

** Those who can, please stand*

The Lighting of the Christ Candle and the Advent Wreath

Light all four Advent candles in the wreath now.

Reader: The season for watching and waiting is over. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. The is the Light of the world, and the darkness cannot extinguish it.

Light the white Christ candle now.

Reader: Joy to the world! Love comes down at Christmas! As we celebrate His birth, we hope that we may bring His love and light into the lives of those around us.

All: Glory to You, O God, for Your joy-filled love. Thank You for the gift of Your Son Jesus. Be born in us anew by the power of Your Holy Spirit. We offer our lives as home to You now, and always. Amen.

Call to Worship

Phillip Chew

Leader: Like the shepherds, we come to the stable, uncertain of what we have heard and seen,

People: longing to hear a word of peace and joy.

Leader: Like the Wise Ones, we have journeys to make, gifts to offer, and hope in our hearts,

People: that this world can change for the better.

All: Here, in the stillness of a winter’s morning, we gather to share the joy of God-with-us. We gather in the wonder of this season to share God’s good news of light and love.

***Opening Hymn: O Come All Ye Faithful (#41)**

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!

All: Our Parent Who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your 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 Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

***Sending Hymn: Angels, from the Realms of Glory (#22)**

Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o’er all the earth; You, who sang creation’s story, now proclaim Messiah’s birth: Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King!

Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o’er your flocks by night, God with us is now residing; yonder shines the infant light: Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King!

Sages, leave your contemplations; brighter visions beam afar; Seek the great desire of nations; you have seen His natal star: Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King!

All creation, join in praising God the Father, Spirit, Son, Evermore your voices raising to the eternal Three in One: Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King!

Sung Benediction: “Silent Night”

Choir

Sermon

Rev. Dr. Sarah Nave

Advent #4 - Love Has Come!
Luke 2:15-20

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherds talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherds were impressed.

Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherds returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!

Musical Interlude

Janet Hill

Opportunity To Present Offerings

All: Give thanks with a grateful heart; give thanks to the Holy One. Give thanks because God's given Jesus Christ, God's Son. (Repeat) And now let the weak say, "I am strong," let the poor say, "I am rich" because of what the Lord has done for us. (Repeat) Give thanks. Give thanks.

*Doxology

All: Praise God from Whom all blessings flow; praise God all creatures here below. Praise God above, ye heavenly host; Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.

*Prayer of Dedication

Phillip Chew

Joys & Concerns

Rev. Dr. Sarah Nave

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!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exaltation!
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!

Invitation to Confession

Phillip Chew

Leader: God's eternal Son took flesh among us when Mary placed her life in the service of God's will. May God increase our longing for Christ our Savior, and prepare our hearts for His coming again as we make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

Phillip Chew

Leader: God-with-us, You came as a baby into our world, forgive us for ignoring Your children who are hungry and lost around us.

People: You became vulnerable for our sake, forgive us when we think being powerful and in control is the only way to live.

Leader: You became poor to serve the world, forgive us for our reliance upon wealth and our constant craving for belongings.

All: God of Christmas, You became one of us, so we might draw closer to You. Touch us with Your steadfast love; strengthen us with Your faithfulness; help us to sing the glad news of the coming of Jesus Christ our Lord, your Child, into our world.

Time for silent reflection and confession to God

Assurance of God's Grace

Phillip Chew

Leader: In the stillness of that first Christmas morning, grace took a breath, a tiny hand clutched love, the Light of life came into the world that we might be forgiven.

All: Thanks be to God! In the name of Jesus Christ, joy of the angels, we are forgiven. Amen.

***Response to God's Forgiveness: Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me (#582 GtG)**

All Sing: Glory to God, whose goodness shines on me,
and to the Son, whose grace has pardoned me,
and to the Spirit, whose love has set me free.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

***Passing of the Peace**

Phillip Chew

Leader: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

All: And also with you.

Children's Message

Rev. Dr. Sarah Nave

Choir Song

"Amen, Go Tell It!" Traditional Spiritual Arr. Donald Moore

***Hymn of Reflection: Once in Royal David's City (#49)**

Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her baby in a manger for His bed.
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable, and His cradle was a stall.
With the poor, oppressed, and lowly, lived on earth our Savior holy.

Jesus is our childhood's pattern, day by day like us He grew;
He was little, weak, and helpless, tears and smiles like us He knew;
And He feels for all our sadness, and He shares in all our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see Him, through His own redeeming love,
for that Child so dear and gentle is our Lord in heaven above;
And He leads His children on to the place where He is gone.

Unison Prayer of Guidance

All: Now may the words of our mouths, the meditations of our hearts, the interpretation of our minds, and the response of our hands be acceptable to You, our Lord and our Redeemer. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Japanese Reading: John 1:14

Michael Wright

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory,
glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

1st Scripture Reading: Luke 2:8-20

Phillip Chew

There were shepherds camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: Glory to God in the heavenly heights,
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.