Seventh Reading: *The Gift* by Mary Oliver *Sue Holder, reader*

Be still, my soul, and steadfast.
Earth and heaven both are still watching
though time is draining from the clock
and your walk, that was confident and quick,
has become slow.

So, be slow if you must, but let
the heart still play its true part.
Love still as once you loved, deeply
and without patience. Let God and the world
know you are grateful. That the gift has been given.

***Congregational Carol**: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* **Red UM Hymnal #240**

Reading and Prayer *Andrea Thorsen*

Brothers and sisters, we celebrate at this time the solemn season of Advent in which the Church bids us to prepare and celebrate the coming of Christ; a coming that we recall in the Child of Bethlehem; a coming that we experience in the gift of his Spirit, in the bread of the Communion, in the joy of human lives that are shared; a coming we wait for when God gathers up all things in Christ. Let us in this holy season reflect on the coming of Christ who brings light to the world. Let us leave behind the darkness of sin, walk in the light that shines on our path, and renew within ourselves the hope of glory to which he beckons us. And as we turn towards the light, let us have on our hearts all those who see no light, for whom all is darkness and despair. Let us pray that they too may be illumined by Christ who is our light.

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty,
we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Announcements. *Rev. Eva Thai-Erwin*

***Benediction** *Rev. Eva Thai-Erwin*

Go now and walk in the light of the Lord.
Stay alert for the Lord is near.
Put on the armor of light
and live openly and honorably.
Pray for peace for all God's people.
And may God clothe you in the light of Christ;
May Christ Jesus teach you his ways;
And may the Holy Spirit keep you alert and prepared
for the coming day of the Lord.
We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. **Amen.**

***Benediction Response**: Peace, Peace/Silent Night

Postlude: Seasonal Selections - CGS String Quartet

CGS String Quartet

Elizabeth Hedman, violin
Julie Rogers, violin
Rodney Wirtz, viola
Dane Little, cello

Special Thanks

To Mary Archibald for allowing her beautiful watercolor paintings to be used for this bulletin, and to the Church of the Good Shepherd Foundation for supporting this special music service.

A Service of Lessons & Carols

Church of the Good Shepherd United Methodist
Sunday, December 15, 2024

Prelude: Seasonal Selections - CGS String Quartet

The Chimes

Introit: O Magnum Mysterium - Javier Busto

Words of Welcome & Passing the Peace *Rev. Eva Thai-Erwin*

Call to Worship *Andrea Thorsen*

Beloved in Christ, in this season of Advent, let it be our care and delight to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the Angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem, to see the Babe lying in a manger. Let us read and mark in the words of great poets the tale of the loving purposes of God who has set the cosmos in motion and has given his children here on earth the beauty of the changing seasons, the promise of rebirth, and the hope of eternal life. With joy, let us celebrate the yearly remembrance of the birth of Jesus with hymns and songs of praise.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace and goodwill over all the earth; for the mission and unity of God's people, especially in this country and within this city. And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us at this time remember in his name the poor and the helpless; the hungry and the oppressed; the sick and those who mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the aged and the little children. Lastly, let us remember before God his pure and lowly Mother, and all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and whom, in this Lord Jesus, we for evermore are one. These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the words which Christ himself hath taught us:

Our father who art in Heaven ...

Advent Wreath Lighting of the Joy Candle - The Parrille & Geis Families
Reader: No matter what troubles overwhelm us today, Isaiah reminds us that in our preparation and pursuit of God's coming kingdom, we must not forget that God's salvation has come and is coming. "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). With joy you will remember that God's salvation is already present among us.

Reader Two: We light this candle of joy as a sign of our commitment to be present to ourselves, our friends, our families, and our neighbors that in sharing our vulnerable lives we might share in the glorious joy of God's salvation together.

Congregation: Faced with the troubles and the suffering of the world, we choose to live in joyful presence to God and one another. We will not turn away from the pain in our world, and we will not stop rejoicing in God, whose salvation fills us to overflowing that God's love might flow through us and flood our troubled world with hope, peace, and joy.

Advent Reflection: *Rev. Eva Thai-Erwin*

First Reading: *O Oriens* by Madeline L'Engle

Chris Holder, reader

O come, O come Emmanuel
within this fragile vessel here to dwell.
O Child conceived by heaven's power
give me thy strength: it is the hour.

O come, thou Wisdom from on high;
like any babe at life you cry;
for me, like any mother, birth
was hard, O light of earth.

O come, O come, thou Lord of might,
whose birth came hastily at night,
born in a stable, in blood and pain
is this the king who comes to reign?

O come, thou Rod of Jesse's stem,
the stars will be thy diadem.
How can the infinite finite be?
Why choose, child, to be born of me?

O come, thou key of David, come,
open the door to my heart-home.
I cannot love thee as a king–
so fragile and so small a thing.

O come, thou Day-spring from on high:
I saw the signs that marked the sky.
I heard the beat of angels' wings
I saw the shepherds and the kings.

O come, Desire of nations, be
simply a human child to me.
Let me not weep that you are born.
The night is gone. Now gleams the morn.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel,
God's Son, God's Self, with us to dwell.

Carol: O Come, O Come Emanuel - arr. Taylor Scott Davis

Second Reading: *Christmas II* by George Herbert

Carolyn Noonchester, reader

The shepherds sing; and shall I silent be?
My God, no hymn for Thee?
My soul's a shepherd too; a flock it feeds
Of thoughts, and words, and deeds.
The pasture is Thy word: the streams, Thy grace
Enriching all the place.
Shepherd and flock shall sing, and all my powers
Outsing the daylight hours.
Then will we chide the sun for letting night
Take up his place and right:

We sing one common Lord; wherefore he should
Himself the candle hold.
I will go searching, till I find a sun
Shall stay, till we have done;
A willing shiner, that shall shine as gladly,
As frost-nipped suns look sadly.
Then will we sing, and shine all our own day,
And one another pay:
His beams shall cheer my breast, and both so twine,
Till ev'n His beams sing, and my music shine.

***Congregational Carol:** Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light

Red UM Hymnal #223

Third Reading: *A Poem for Advent* by E.E. Cummings

Stephenson Holder, reader

maybe god
is a child
's hand)very carefully
bring
-ing

to you and to
me(and quite with
out crushing)the
papery weightless diminutive
world
with a hole in
it out

of which demons with wings would be streaming if
something had(maybe they couldn't
agree)not happened(and floating-
ly int

o

Carol: Child of Light - Mack Wilberg

Fourth Reading: *Little Tree* by E.E. Cummings

Margaret Blair, reader

little tree
little silent Christmas tree
you are so little
you are more like a flower
who found you in the green forest
and were you very sorry to come away?
see i will comfort you
because you smell so sweetly
i will kiss your cool bark
and hug you safe and tight

just as your mother would,
only don't be afraid
look the spangles
that sleep all the year in a dark box
dreaming of being taken out
and allowed to shine,
the balls the chains red and gold
the fluffy threads,
put up your little arms
and i'll give them all to you to hold
every finger shall have its ring
and there won't be a single place dark or unhappy

then when you're quite dressed
you'll stand in the window
for everyone to see
and how they'll stare!
oh but you'll be very proud
and my little sister and i
will take hands
and looking up at our beautiful tree
we'll dance and sing
"Noel Noel"

***Congregational Carol**: The First Noel - arr. John Michael Trotta
Congregation joins on v. 1, 2, & 4 - see insert for lyrics

Fifth Reading: *The Glory is Fallen Out of* by E.E. Cummings

Kirk Averitt, reader

the glory is fallen out of
the sky the last immortal
leaf
is
dead and the gold
year
a formal spasm
in the
dust
this is the passing of all shining things
therefore we also
blandly

into receptive
earth,O let
us
descend
take
shimmering wind
these fragile splendors from
us crumple them hide
them in thy breath drive
them in nothingness
for we
would sleep

this is the passing of all shining things
no lingering no backward-
wondering be unto
us O
soul,but straight
glad feet fearruining
and glorygirded
faces
lead us
into the
serious
steep
darkness

Carol: My Song in the Night - Southern Folk Hymn arr. Paul Christiansen

Sixth Reading: *Christmas Eve* by Christina Rosetti

Joe D'Amore, reader

Christmas hath a darkness
Brighter than the blazing noon,
Christmas hath a chillness
Warmer than the heat of June,
Christmas hath a beauty
Lovelier than the world can show:

For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
Brought for us so low.
Earth, strike up your music,
Birds that sing and bells that ring;
Heaven hath answering music
For all Angels soon to sing:

Earth, put on your whitest
Bridal robe of spotless snow:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
Brought for us so low.

Carol: In the Bleak Midwinter, arr. Mark Hayes

Sue Holder, soloist