Reading and Prayer **Andrea Thorsen**

Beloved in Christ, as we draw this service to a close, we stand in that tender space where Heaven leans near and calls us again to hope, to love, and to carry peace and joy into a waiting world. We have heard again the sacred story of God drawing near in Jesus, the Child of Bethlehem, whose birth still stirs hope in our hearts. We have listened to prophets and poets who dare to dream of a world made new, and who have reminded us that even when darkness is all around, God will send light to our problem world. And so, we who have seen even a glimmer of that light are called to carry it, to walk in it, to live by it, and to let it shine through us into the darkness. For we know the darkness will not overcome it.

Almighty God, stir within us the bright hope of your coming Kingdom. Grant us grace to cast off fear and indifference, and clothe ourselves with compassion and courage. Make us instruments of your peace, lifting the weary, feeding the hungry, comforting those who mourn, and standing for justice with humility and love. Give us hearts like Mary, who trusted your word; persistence like the shepherds, who ran toward your promise; and wisdom of the magi, who followed the light you set before them. Lead us, O Lord, until your light shines in every place and your love is born anew in us and among us. Through Jesus Christ our Savior and Redeemer. 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: Angels From The Realms of Glory/God Rest Ye Merry, arr. by J. McAllister **Syrinx Woodwind Quintet**
Lob des hohen Verstandes, Gustav Mahler, arr. by Trevor Cramer

Syrinx Wind Quintet

Gigi Brady, oboe
Micah Wright, clarinet
Patrick Olmos, saxophone
Mathieu Girardet, bass clarinet
Alex Rosales Garcia, bassoon

CGS String Quintet

Elizabeth Hedman, violin
Julie Rogers, violin
Carrie Holzman Little, viola
Colleen Sugata, 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 14, 2025

Prelude: Danza del Trigo, Alberto Ginastera, arr. Mathieu Girardet **Syrinx Woodwind Quintet**

The Chimes

Introit: Come, Promised One, John D. Becker

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

Call to Worship **Andrea Thorsen**

Beloved in Christ, in this season of waiting and wonder, as daylight fades, let us come with open hearts to hear again the message of the Angels. Let us read in the words of scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God, who has set the cosmos in motion and given his children here on earth the beauty of the changing seasons, the promise of rebirth, and the hope of eternal life. We come today to dream of a renewed world that rejoices in justice and kindness.

But first, because it would surely gladden the heart of Christ, let us pray for our current world: for peace across every land and goodwill among all peoples. Let us hold before God the poor and the powerless, the hungry and the oppressed, the sick and those who mourn. In these candle-lit days of Advent, may we remember that Christ calls us everday to be the very light that we await and bids us to shine that light into every shadowed place until the world becomes, in truth, that renewed one we proclaim and long to see.

Finally, let us remember all who rejoice with us now from another shore and in a greater light – that great cloud of witnesses whose hope was in the Word made flesh. May we take up their holy work: to dream of earth as it is in heaven, to labor for God's Kingdom made real among us, and to let this Advent story – of Love born in the humblest place – guide our steps and shape our lives. With these prayers and our devotion let us lift our hearts to heaven in the very words Jesus taught us, saying: **Our father who art in Heaven hallowed be thy name...**

Advent Wreath Lighting of the Joy Candle

Reader: Isaiah 35: 10 reminds us, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." We light this candle of joy as a sign of the Truth that sets us free to live in joy as we wait and work for the day when all creation will flourish together.

All: In the midst of our waiting and longing for God to make the world right again, we cling to the truth that God has saved, God is saving, and God will save. So today, we join our voices with the prophet Isaiah, who calls us to live in the joy of the truth of God's salvation.

Advent Reflection: **Rev. Eva Thai-Erwin**

First Reading: Isaiah 11:1-4, 6, 9 — **Chris Holder, reader**

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him -
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will put down the wicked.
Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
The wolf will lie down with the lamb,
the leopard will live with the goat...

They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

Second Reading: I Dream a World, Langston Hughes — **Susan Holder, reader**

I dream a world where man
No other man will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn.

I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.

A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,

Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all mankind—
Of such I dream, my world!

Anthem: To Sit and Dream, Rosephanye Powell
Chancel Choir and Orchestra

Third Reading: Luke 1:26–38 — **Margaret Blair, reader**

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David.

The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." …

Fourth *Responsive* Reading: Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi — **Joseph D'Amore, reader**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, **let me sow love;**
where there is injury, **pardon;**
where there is doubt, **faith;**
where there is despair, **hope;**
where there is darkness, **light;**
where there is sadness, **joy.**

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

M. Archibald

***Congregational Carol: Love Came Down at Christmas** — **Red Hymnal #242**

Fifth Reading: Luke 1:46–55 – The Magnificat — **Susan Janss, reader**

And Mary said:
My soul doth magnify the Lord,
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations.
He hath shown strength with his arm.
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat
and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things.
And the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath helped his servant Israel
as he promised to our forefathers Abraham, and his seed forever.

Sixth Reading: Excerpts from *Christmas Sermon on Peace & Nonviolence*, MLK Jr. — **Kirk Averitt, reader**

Magnificat in D Major, ZWV 108 - Jan Dismas Zelenka, 1725
Chancel Choir and Orchestra
I. Magnificat
Susan Holder, soloist
II. Suscepit Israel
Carolyn Noonchester, soloist
III. Amen

Seventh Reading: John 1:1-14 — **Stephenson Holder, reader**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it…

***Congregational Carol: O Little Town of Bethlehem** — **Red Hymnal #230**

Eighth Reading: Matthew 2:2-12 — **Garrison Holder, reader**

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked,

"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."…

***Congregational Carol: De Tierra Lejana Venimos** — **Red Hymnal #243**

Ninth Reading: Luke 2:8-14 — **Carolyn Noonchester, reader**

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid…

Anthem: My Lord Has Come, Will Todd
Chancel Choir and Orchestra

Tenth Reading: Philippians 2:5-11 — **Kirk Averitt, reader**

Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind…

***Congregational Carol: Hark the Herald Angels Sing** — **Red Hymnal #240**