

A SERVICE OF CHRISTMAS LESSONS AND CAROLS



ST. PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
HOUSTON, TEXAS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2022 AT 4 & 6 PM



Welcome to St. Paul's United Methodist Church!

*Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven;
for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.*

Luke 6:23

Christmas is a vision that enables us to look around and see what is amazing and good in our lives and in our community. It is also a reminder that we all need the laughter of God to keep us from taking ourselves too seriously. Our laughter is the echo of Christmas joy in each one of us.

If you really understand and accept the mystery of Bethlehem, "glad tidings of great joy," your heart will be filled with the laughter of God. *"You are sad now but I shall see you again, and your hearts will be full of joy, and that joy no one shall take from you."* (John 16:22)

I know that Advent season has been busy and hectic for all of us. As you sit in the beauty of our sanctuary, this may be the first moment that you have had to catch your breath. May all that busyness fade away as you hear the scriptures read, as we sing the familiar carols, and then, as we light our candles. I pray that this service can be a time of rest and gladness; that you are able to feel the hope, peace, joy, and love that Jesus brings into our lives.

Thank you for being a part of our Christmas Eve services at St. Paul's and I hope you have a wonderful Christmas Day.

O Come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Jeff McDonald
Senior Pastor

A SERVICE OF CHRISTMAS LESSONS AND CAROLS

*The St. Paul's family welcomes you as we worship God together.
We strive to be full, active, conscious participants in our liturgical life together.*

PRELUDE

Sinfonia (from the Christmas Oratorio)	Johann Sebastian Bach
Prelude on "Greensleeves"	Richard Purvis
"Noël Étranger"	Louis-Claude Daquin
Prelude on "The Holly and the Ivy"	Herbert Sumsion
Canonic Variations on "Vom Himmel hoch da komm' ich her" (<i>"From Heaven above to earth I come"</i>)	Johann Sebastian Bach

WELCOME

The congregation rises as the crucifer passes.

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

"Once in Royal David's City"

IRBY

Verses 1-2 sung by Choir only.

Verses 3-5 sung by All.



1. Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly cat - tle shed,
2. He came down to earth from heav - en who is God and Lord of all,
3. Je - sus is our child - hood's pat - tern; day by day, like us, he grew;
4. And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re - deem - ing love;
5. Not in that poor low - ly sta - ble, with the ox - en stand - ing round,



where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a man - ger for his bed;
and his shel - ter was a sta - ble, and his cra - dle was a stall.
he was lit - tle, weak and help - less, tears and smiles like us he knew;
for that child so dear and gen - tle is our Lord in heaven a - bove;
we shall see him, but in hea - ven, where his saints his throne sur - round:



Ma - ry, lov - ing moth - er mild, Je - sus Christ, her lit - tle child.
With the poor, the scorned, the low - ly lived on earth our Sa - vior ho - ly.
and he feel - eth for our sad - ness, and he shar - eth in our glad - ness.
and he leads his child - ren on to the place where he is gone.
Christ, re - vealed to faith - ful eye, set at God's right hand on high.

THE BIDDING PRAYER

Beloved in Christ, on this Christmas Eve let it be our care and delight to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the angels, and to go in heart and mind to Bethlehem, and to see the loving kindness of our God, and the Babe lying in a manger.

Therefore, let us hear again from Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God, from the first days of our sin until the glorious redemption brought us by this holy Child; and let us thank God with our carols of praise.

But first let us pray for the needs of this whole world; and especially for peace and goodwill among all people, that they may learn to love one another, as children of the one God.

And because this would most rejoice Jesus' heart, let us remember before him the poor, the cold, the hungry, the oppressed; the sick and them that mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the aged and the little children; and all who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sins have grieved his heart.

Lastly, let us remember before God 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 with whom in this Lord Jesus we evermore are one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer to God, in the words that Christ himself taught us:

THE 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,
for thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

All sit.

CAROL

“Ding Dong! Merrily on High”

Arr. Charles Wood

Ding dong! Merrily on high in heaven the bells are ringing.

Ding dong! Verily the sky is riven with angel singing.

Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis!

E'en so here below, below, let steeple bells be swungen,

And “io, io, io!” by priest and people sungen.

Pray you, dutifully prime your matin chime, ye ringers;

May you beautifully rime your evetime song, ye singers.

FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL

“I Wonder As I Wander”

Arr. John Rutter

I wonder as I wander out under the sky
 how Jesus the Saviour did come for to die
 for poor orn'ry people like you and like I;
 I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus 'twas in a cow's stall
 with wise men and farmers and shepherds and all
 but high from God's heaven, a star's light did fall
 and the promise of ages it then did recall.

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing
 a star in the sky or a bird on the wing
 or all of God's Angels in heaven to sing
 He surely could have it, 'cause he was the King.

SECOND LESSON

Isaiah 11:1-4, 6-9

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

All stand.

HYMN

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

St. LOUIS

Verses 3 sung by the Choir only



1. O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie; a - bove thy deep and
 2. For Christ is born of Ma - ry, and gath - ered all a - bove, while mor - tals sleep, the
 3. How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is given; so God im - parts to
 4. O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray; cast out our sin, and



dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by. Yet in thy dark streets shi - neth the
 an - gels keep their watch of won - dering love. O mor - ning stars to - geth - er pro -
 hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heaven. No ear may hear his com - ing, but
 en - ter in, be born in us to - day. We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the



ev - er - last - ing light; the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
 claim the ho - ly birth, and prais - es sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth!
 in this world of sin, where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
 great glad ti - dings tell; O come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el!

All sit.

THIRD LESSON

Luke 1:26-35, 38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL

"Mary's Magnificat"

Andrew Carter

Softly a light is stealing,
Sweetly a maiden sings,
Ever wakeful, ever wistful.
Watching faithfully, thankfully, tenderly
Her King of kings.
My soul doth magnify the Lord:
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

Mary her song to Jesus
Softly, serenely sings:
"I will love you, I will serve you,
May my lullaby glorify, magnify
My King of kings."

FOURTH LESSON

Luke 2:1-7

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.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL

"O Little One Sweet"

Johann Sebastian Bach

O little one sweet, O little one mild, with joy thou hast the whole world filled;
Thou camest here from heaven's domain, to bring us comfort in our pain,
O little one sweet, O little one mild.
O little one sweet, O little one mild, in thee love's beauty is distilled;
So light in us thy love's bright flame, that we may give thee back the same,
O little one sweet, O little one mild.

FIFTH LESSON

Luke 2:8-20

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.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

All stand.

HYMN

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

GLORIA



- 1. An-gels we have heard on high sweet - ly sing - ing o'er the plains, and the moun-tains in re - ply
- 2. Come to Beth-le - hem and see Christ, whose birth the an - gels sing; come, a - dore on bend - ed knee,
- 3. See him in a man-ger laid, whom the choirs of an - gels praise; Ma - ry, Jo - seph, led your aid,



ech - o - ing their joy - ous strains.
 Christ the Lord, the new-born King. Glo - - - - - ri - a in ex-cel-sis
 while our hearts in love we raise.



De - o! Glo - - - - - ri - a in ex-cel-sis De - o!

All sit.

SIXTH LESSON

Matthew 2:1-11

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL

“No Small Wonder”

Paul Edwards

Small wonder the star, small wonder the light, the angels in chorus, the shepherds in fright;
But stable and manger for God — no small wonder!

Small wonder the kings, small wonder they bore the gold and the incense, the myrrh to adore;
But God gives his life on a cross — no small wonder!

Small wonder the love, small wonder the grace, the power, the glory, the light of his face;
But all to redeem my poor heart — no small wonder!

All stand.

HYMN

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

MENDELSSOHN



1. Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King;
2. Christ, by high - est heaven a - dored; Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord;
3. Hail the heaven - born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righ - teous - ness!



peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!"
late in time, be - hold him come, off - spring of the vir - gin's womb.
Light and life to all he brings, risen with heal - ing in his wings.



Joy - ful, all ye na - tions rise, join the tri - umph of the skies;
Veiled in flesh the God - head see; hail th'in - car - nate De - i - ty,
Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,



with th'an - gel - ic host pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el.
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us se - cond birth.



Hark! the he - rald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King!"

All sit.

HOMILY

“The Fragility of Christmas”

Rev. Dr. Jeff McDonald

OFFERING

“A Babe is Born All Of a Maid”

William Mathias

A babe is born all of a maid,
to bring salvation unto us.
To him we sing both night and day,
Veni Creator Spiritus. (Come, Creator Spirit)

At Bethlehem that blessed place,
the child of bliss now born he was.
And him to serve God give us grace,
O lux beata trinitas. (O light of the blessed Trinity)

There came three kings out of the east,
to worship the King that is so free.
With gold and myrrh and frankincense,
a solis ortus cardine. (from the rising sun)

The angels came down with one cry,
a fair song that night sung they
In worship of that child,
Gloria tibi Domine. (Glory to you, Lord)

A babe is born all of a maid,
to bring salvation unto us.
To him we sing both night and day,
Veni Creator Spiritus. O lux beata trinitas.
A solis ortus cardine. Gloria tibi Domine.
Noel!

SEVENTH LESSON

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

The light of Christ is passed to all. Please tip unlit candles toward the flame, taking care to hold lit candles upright at all times.

All stand.

HYMN

"Silent Night"

STILLE NACHT



1. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, all is calm, all is bright round you vir - gin moth er and child.
2. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, won-drous star, lend thy light; with the an - gels let us sing,



Ho - ly in - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav-en-ly peace, sleep in heav-en-ly peace.
Al - le - lu - ia to our King; Christ the Sav - ior is born, Christ the Sav - ior is born!

COLLECT

Let us pray. Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word. Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Remain standing for the Processional Hymn.

HYMN

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

ADESTE FIDELES



1. O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant, O come ye, O come ye to
2. True God of true God, Light from light E - ter - nal, lo, he shuns not the
3. See how the shep - herds, sum-moned to his cra - dle, leav - ing their flocks, draw
4. Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion; Sing, all ye ci - ti - zens of
5. Yea, Lord we greet thee, Born this hap - py morn - ing, Je - su, to thee be



Beth - le - hem. Come and be - hold him, born the King of an - gels;
Vir - gin's womb; Son of the Fa - ther, be - got - ten, not cre - a - ted;
nigh to gaze; we too will thith - er bend our joy - ful foot - steps; O come, let us a -
heaven a - bove; Glo - ry to God In the high - est;
glo - ry given; Word of the Fa - ther, Now in flesh ap - pear - ing;



dore him, O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him, Christ the Lord.

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING

May the Christ who by his incarnation gathered into One things earthly and heavenly, fill you with the sweetness of inward peace and goodwill; and the blessing of God, the love of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

VOLUNTARY

"Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella"

Arr. Keith Chapman

Upon leaving, please extinguish candles carefully, and return them to the boxes provided at the exits.

LAY READERS

4 pm Service:

Justin Flint, Brett Chiquet, Julie Countiss, Brad Harmes, Rob Negrin, and Cindy Snow

6 pm Service:

James Flores, Mary Linda Portner, Karen Peck, Luke Olshefski, Carole Hutchens, and Josh Vanlandingham

CHRISTMAS GREENERY is placed to the glory of God in thanksgiving by the St. Paul's Choir.

Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service obtained from One License with license #A-729097.

EVENTS AT ST. PAUL'S

Being in community with one another is an essential part of life at St. Paul's.

For all events and gatherings, more information and registration links are available by visiting www.stpaulshouston.org/events or by calling (713)528-0527.

Christmas Day Worship – *Sunday, December 25, at 10 am.* Come celebrate Christmas with your St. Paul's family and enjoy Christmas cookies on the Plaza following the service. On Christmas Day, Sunday School classes will not meet. For Sunday School on January 1, please check with your class leader.

Fine Arts Academy Registration – *Open now. Register online for the Spring 2023 semester.* Classes are offered in Art and Musikgarten. Individual lessons are available in Art, Piano and Voice. Classes begin the week of January 17.

The Art Tent Critical Need – Volunteers are needed at The Art Tent, which is a space for people experiencing homelessness to express themselves through visual art. Contact Helen Spaw at hspaw@stpaulshouston.org.

Epiphany Sunday – *January 1, at 10 am.* We will gather for one service on the first Sunday of the new year. Come together in the plaza following the service to toast the new year with your St. Paul's family.

Still on Fire: A Talk with Jan Phillips – *Saturday, January 7, at 9 am.* Come enjoy a talk with Jan Phillips - a visionary thought leader, award-winning author and dynamic speaker who provokes thought and inspires action. She creates a unique multi-sensory experience, weaving together humor, storytelling, video and music to inspire and ignite insights for life-changing action. Cost is \$25; registration is available online or by calling the front desk.

Welcome Reception for Rev. Melinda Owens and Rev. Brandi Horton – *Sunday, January 8, at 9:30 am in the parlor.* Come meet and welcome our new Congregational Care Pastor and Executive Pastor of Operations.

Wonderfully Made – *January 20-22.* We have a new educational event for our 5th - 7th graders that gives factual information on physical and spiritual development and human sexuality that's grounded in our faith. A parent meeting will take place on Friday, January 20, with the Retreat for 5th-7th graders on Saturday, January 21. On Sunday, January 22, we will wrap up the weekend with a family lunch.

St. Paul's Day – *Sunday, January 29.* Celebrate our St. Paul's community with morning worship celebrating the Feast Day of the Conversion of Paul and then return at 4 pm for a concert and all-church dinner! All our choirs (St. Paul's Choir, Choral Scholars, Treble Choir, Choristers, and Wesley Singers) will be joined by members of the Mercury Chamber Orchestra for a festive concert which will include Benedicity (Song of Creation) by British composer, Andrew Carter.



ST. PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

5501 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77004

713-528-0527 www.stpaulshouston.org

Rev. Dr. Jeff McDonald, Senior Minister