

# NEW YEAR'S EVE

Northampton Presbyterian Church

*“Watch Night” Service*

*December 31, 2022*

*5:00 PM*

# PRELUDE

*(Trish Conover, Soprano / Jessica Stehr, Piano)*

*O Holy Night*

*Adams*

*During the Prelude, the light is carried in to the sanctuary and all candles on the Advent wreath are lit.*

# WELCOME

# **OPENING PRAYER**

**God of glory, your splendor shines from a manger in Bethlehem, where the Light of the world is humbly born into the darkness of human night. Open our eyes to Christ's presence in the shadows of our world, so that we, like him, may become beacons of your justice, and defenders of all for whom there is no room. Amen.**

# HYMN

*Love Has Come*

*BRING A TORCH*

**Love has come: a light in the darkness!  
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.  
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;  
Hear how their song of joy arises:  
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!  
Love! Love! Glory to God on high!**

**Love is born! Come, share in the wonder.  
Love is God now asleep in the hay.  
See the glow in the eyes of his mother;  
What is the name her heart is saying?  
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers.  
Love! Love! Jesus, Emmanuel.**

**Love has come and never will leave us!**

**Love is life everlasting and free.**

**Love is Jesus within and among us.**

**Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.**

**Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas.**

**Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!**



# A READING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

*Isaiah 52:7-10 KJV*

## THE CONFESSION: TOWARD THE LIGHT

*God of angels and alleluias, we confess that...*

Too often our answer to the darkness is not running toward Bethlehem but running away. We ought to know by now that we can't see where we're going in the dark. Running away is rampant... Separation is stylish: separation from partners, from friends, from self. Run and tranquilize, don't talk about it, avoid. Run away and join the army of those who have already run away. When are we going to learn that Christmas Peace comes only when we turn and face the darkness? Only then will we be able to see the Light of the World.

*(We pause for a moment of silent personal confession.)*

## **WORDS OF ASSURANCE AND PARDON**

Come and see! The light of God has come into our world to proclaim God's justice and love; it has overcome the darkness and brought new life.

Come and follow! Christ our companion has redeemed our world. He draws us into a loving family from every tribe and family and culture.

Go and tell! The Spirit has equipped us for service, to love our neighbors as we do ourselves; to bring God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

Come and see, come and follow, go and tell! In God's Love the nations of the earth will put their hope.



# **RESPONSE: HYMN**

*Jesus, the Light of the World*

*WE'LL WALK IN THE LIGHT*

**Hark! the herald angels sing. Jesus, the light of the world.**

**Glory to the newborn King, Jesus, the light of the world.**

**We'll walk in the light, beautiful light.**

**Come where the dewdrops of mercy shine bright.**

**O, shine all around us by day and by night.**

**Jesus, the light of the world.**

**Joyful, all you nations, rise. Jesus, the light of the world.  
Join the triumph of the skies. Jesus, the light of the world.  
We'll walk in the light, beautiful light.  
Come where the dewdrops of mercy shine bright.  
O, shine all around us by day and by night.  
Jesus, the light of the world.**

**Christ, by highest heaven adored; Jesus, the light of the world.**

**Christ, the everlasting Lord; Jesus, the light of the world.**

**We'll walk in the light, beautiful light.**

**Come where the dewdrops of mercy shine bright.**

**O, shine all around us by day and by night.**

**Jesus, the light of the world.**

**Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Jesus, the light of the world.**

**Hail, the Sun of righteousness! Jesus, the light of the world.**

**We'll walk in the light, beautiful light.**

**Come where the dewdrops of mercy shine bright.**

**O, shine all around us by day and by night.**

**Jesus, the light of the world.**

# **A READING FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT**

*John 1:1-14*

## **AN OFFERING OF OUR FEARS AND HOPES**

*You are invited to write on the PURPLE paper your FEARS for the coming year and bring them forward, leaving them at the table.*

*The pastor will offer a word of blessing and we will sing:*

*HYMN: Abide with Me (vs. 1)*

**Abide with me:**

**Fast falls the eventide.**

**The darkness deepens;**

**Lord, with me abide!**

**When other helpers**

**Fail and comforts flee,**

**Help of the helpless,**

**O, abide with me.**



*You are invited to write on the WHITE paper your HOPES for the coming year and bring them forward, leaving them at the table.*

*The pastor will offer a word of blessing and we will sing:*

*HYMN: Abide with Me (vs. 4)*

**I fear no foe,  
With thee at hand to bless;  
Ills have no weight,  
And tears no bitterness.  
Where is death's sting?  
Where, grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still,  
If thou abide with me.**

# RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION

ONE: Lord, I was a pile of ash and you made me a light for the world.

**MANY: I was a stone, and you made me salt for the earth.**

ONE: I was as lifeless as clay and you made me part of the Body of Christ.

**MANY: I was sinful and you made me holy.**

ONE: I was nothing and you made me part of everything.

**MANY: Lord, in you I am transformed and transformed still again.**

ONE: When the discouraged cry for hope, make me hope.

**MANY: When the hungry cry for bread, make me bread.**

ONE: When the thirsty cry for water, make me water.

**MANY: When the suffering cry for help, make me help.**

ONE: When the sick cry for healing, make me healing.

**MANY: When the bound cry for freedom, make me freedom.**

ONE: When the outcasts cry for love, make me love.

Lord who is hope, who is bread and water, who is help and healing, who is freedom, and who is love,

**MANY: Transform me anew, and so keep me close to you, as you transform the world. Amen.**

# 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

## HYMN

*On This Night of Celebration*

*HYMN TO JOY*

**On this night of celebration,  
At this time when hopes are new,  
God, we gather as your people,  
Called to put our trust in you.**

**You have made the world we live in;  
You have worked through history.  
In your plan we find our purpose,  
In your love, our unity.**



**Long ago, you sent our Savior  
To this world in deep despair.  
In your Word made flesh you came,  
Our life to know, our sins to bear.**

**Christ has died and Christ is risen!  
At this new year we proclaim:  
Yesterday, today, forever —  
Jesus Christ is still the same!**

**Through two thousand years of changes,  
Through these passing centuries,  
You have called your church to witness  
To Christ's love that claims and frees.**

**Each new generation hears you,  
Each must find a fresh new way  
To make known the life you offer,  
To the people in their day.**

**On this day, we pause and wonder  
What the future years will bring,  
Yet we know you clothe each flower  
And you make each sparrow sing.**

**How much more will you protect us  
With your guiding, caring hand!  
By your Spirit, lead us boldly  
In the future you have planned.**

# A READING: THE CROSS IN THE MANGER

## HYMN

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (vss. 6 & 7)*

*VENI EMMANUEL*

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer

Our spirits by thine advent here;

Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,

And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel.

**O come, Desire of nations, bind  
All peoples in one heart and mind;  
Bid envy, strife and discourse cease;  
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel.**

# A BLESSING (RESPONSIVE)

ONE: At the dawn of a new year, we welcome hope for a new world.

**MANY: Let the darkness lift, to welcome a dawn of plenty, with enough for everyone and people ready to share.**

ONE: Let tomorrow begin, with new energy for the struggle to free all from the grip of terror and oppression.

**MANY: Let the light shine, to open a path to safety for all who are seeking home and longing for life.**

ONE: At the dawn of a new year we come to declare our hope and to welcome a new world.

**MANY: May it be so! Amen!**



# POSTLUDE

*Auld Lang Syne*

Traditional

## WORSHIP NOTES:

The **Opening Prayer** is from *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, a service of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library. copyright © 2002 Augsburg Fortress. Year A - Advent: Revised Common Lectionary (vanderbilt.edu)

The **Confession** is adapted from a poem by Ann Weems in her volume, *Kneeling in Bethlehem* (p. 18). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

The **Liturgy of Assurance** is adapted from a prayer by Christine Sine on Godspace.  
<http://godspace-msa.com> and posted on the website of the Irricana United Church.  
<http://irricanaunited.efirehose.net/Jan%206%2013%20Epiphany.pdf>

The **Liturgy of Transformation** is posted on the Catholic Relief Services website.  
<https://www.crs.org/resource-center>

The **Hymn**, “On This Day of Celebration,” is written by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. With her permission, we have adapted the title for tonight’s service. The hymn is included in *Gifts of Love: New Hymns for Today's Worship* (Geneva Press, 2000). Copyright © 1999 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved.

The **Reading** is of Ann Weems’ poem, “It Is Not Over,” Weems, Ann; Weems, Ann. *Kneeling in Bethlehem* (p. 76). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

The **Blessing** is adapted from a prayer written by Susan Durber and posted on the Monthly Prayers page of the Christian Aid website. <http://www.christianaid.org.uk>

Hymns are from the *Glory to God Hymnal*, The Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, Louisville, KY, 2017. All are licensed for use by CCLI.

Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service obtained from One License with license # A-739749.



Watch Night, also called Freedom's Eve, is a Christian religious service held on New Year's Eve. In many African American churches it is associated with a celebration and remembrance of the Emancipation Proclamation (enacted January 1, 1863), which freed slaves in the Confederate states during the American Civil War.

On the night of December 31, 1862, abolitionists, enslaved and free African Americans gathered, many in secret, to ring in the new year and await news – via telegraph, newspaper or word of mouth - that the Emancipation Proclamation had taken effect. Just a few months earlier, on September 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued the executive order that declared enslaved people in the rebelling Confederate States legally free. However, the decree would not take effect until the clock struck midnight at the start of the new year.

"... for a people largely held in bondage, freedom is a powerful idea — and that's what the Watch Night tradition embodies. It includes the memory of slavery and freedom, reflections on faith, and celebration of community and strength." ~ Lonnie Bunch, founding director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) and Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

Many mainline Protestant churches in the United States sponsor a Watch Night service on New Year's Eve. The tradition of Watch Night may be traced to the early 18th century in Moravian churches, when churchgoers began marking the occasion with a vigil to reflect upon the year past and to contemplate the one to come. John Wesley adopted the practice for his Methodist followers, who held similar vigils monthly with the full moon.\*

\*These notes are excerpted from "'Watch Nights,' A New Year's Celebration of Emancipation" by Allison Keyes on [www.npr.com](http://www.npr.com), 12/29/2012, and "The Historical Legacy of Watch Night" on the website of the National Museum of African American History and Culture at The Smithsonian, [The Historical Legacy of Watch Night | National Museum of African American History and Culture \(si.edu\)](http://www.si.edu)