**“The Peace of Christmas”**

“[Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas.](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/c/calvincool121116.html?src=t_christmas)”

[Calvin Coolidge](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/c/calvin_coolidge.html)

**Order of Service**

December 24, 2015

5 pm

**Prelude:**

**Ringing of the Bell**

**Chalice Lighting:** by G.Woods

Read by Declan Lanning

**Opening Words:** from John K. Harmon

**Opening Carol:** #225 “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

**Reading:** from Luke 2, Oxford Bible, new RSV

 Read by Evelyn Weymouth

**Carol:** #244 “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” (Vs. 1 & 4)

**Reading:** from *On the Night You Were Born*

by Nancy Tillman

read by Chelsea Krafka

**Carol:** #231 “Angels We Have Heard on High”

**Candlelighting for Our New Lives:** read by Chelsea Krafka

**Carol:** #245 “Joy to the World”

**Reading:** from Kenneth W. Phifer

 Read by LauraLee Woodruff

**A Musical Meditation:** “Christmas in the Trenches”

 By John McCutcheon,

 Sung by Roger Geery

**Homily:** “The Peace of Christmas”

**Offering and Offertory:** “The Peace of Christmas Day”

by Bob Beers, sung by Roger Geery,

Schuyler Geery-Zink, Julie Enersen

**Candle Lighting Ceremony:** from Morris W. Hudgins

**Closing Words:** from Sydney Wilde-Nugent

**Closing Carol:** #251 ”Silent Night”

**Worship Leader:** the Rev. Dr. Gretchen Woods

**Pianist:** Barb Brant

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Chalice Lighting:

**We kindle a flame of hope,**

**Of warmth, of enlightenment,**

**Radiant against the dark of winter’s night,**

**Illuminating a deeper knowing:**

**That our light joins those of others**

**Who share our dreams for peace with justice,**

**That truth and love may yet turn the tide**

 **against fear, evil, and war,**

**That longing for peace still exists**

**within the hearts and minds of all peoples.**

**So may it be!** (by Gretchen Woods)

Opening Words: from John K. Harmon

 Read by

**Open the doors of the sanctuary for the people to come and rejoice. Enter into the fellowship of those who celebrate life with its warmth and its beauty, its pain and its healing. Come into the temple of delight for a season of simple pleasure. Come in imagery to behold the bright mystical star; to hear echoes of voices ethereal far away. Take counsel here of legendary lore, the wisdom of poetry and myth. Join together one and all in the spirit of Christmastide to stir into hope the vision of trust and justice o’er all the world; that peace and goodwill may bless and keep us in every generation.**

**Opening Carol:** #225 “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

**Reading**: from Luke 2, Oxford Bible, new RSV

 Read by Evelyn Weumouth

**In those days a decree went out form 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 town 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 room for them in the inn.**

 **In that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then the 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 to all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior. 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.**

**Carol:** #244 “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” (Vs. 1 & 4)

**Reading:** from *On the Night You Were Born*

by Nancy Tillman

read by Chelsea Krafka

**On the night you were born, the moon shone with such wonder that the stars peeked in to see you**

**… and the night wind whispered, 'Life will never be the same.' Because there had never been anyone like you... ever in the world.**

**So enchanted with you were the wind and the rain that they whispered the sound of your wonderful name.**

**It sailed through the farmland high on the breeze…over the ocean… and through the trees…**

**Until everyone heard it**

 **and everyone knew of the one**

 **and only ever you.**

**When the polar bears heard,**

 **they danced until dawn.**

**From faraway places, the geese flew home.**

**The moon stayed up until morning next day.**

**And Mother Earth herself sang you**

 **a sweet lullaby of welcome.**

**That was what happened on the night**

 **you were born.**

**So… if ever you doubt how special you are,**

**and you wonder who loves you…**

 **as all children sometimes do…**

**listen for the geese honking high in the sky (They’re singing a song to remember you by)**

**Or notice the bears asleep at the zoo.**

**(It’s because they’ve been up dancing all**

**night- just for you!)**

**Or drift off to sleep to the sound**

 **of the wind.**

**(Listen closely… it whispers your name).**

**Or look at the moon.**

**Or listen closely to the song of the Earth.**

**And know this: Never before in story or rhyme has the world ever known a YOU, my dear, and it never will again.**

**And I, for one… I thank heaven… for the blessed night that you were born.**

**Carol:** #231 “Angels We Have Heard on High”

**Candlelighting for Our New Lives:** read by Chelsea Krafka

**Our sign out front says “Each night a child is born is a holy night”**

**The words are from the well-known work of Unitarian educator Sophia Lyons Fahs**

**For so the children come --**

**Always the same way --**

**Born of human seed.**

**No angels herald their beginnings.**

**No prophets predict their future courses.**

**No wisemen see a star to show**

 **where to find the babe that will save humankind.**

**Yet each night a child is born is a holy night,**

**Mothers, Fathers,**

**– sitting beside their children’s cribs**

**Feel glory in the sight of a new life beginning –**

**Each night a child is born is a holy night –**

 **A time for singing**

 **A time for wondering**

 **A time for worshipping**

**We’ve had such nights this year**

**since we last gathered at this time**

**Now we light a candle for each of them**

**Carol:** #245 “Joy to the World”

Reading: from Kenneth W. Phifer

 Read by LauraLee Woodruff

**W.H. Auden wrote that to pray is to pay attention to something or someone other than oneself. In this season when it is so easy to dwell on the riches that we have, to think only of the gifts we will receive and the feasting that we will enjoy, the friends we will see again and the many joys that will fill our lives in this festive time, let us also pray in hope and in love**

 **For those who still suffer under the ravages of war**

 **For those who bear the burden of oppression and injustice**

 **For those who are without friends and lonely**

 **For those who live in constant pain**

 **For those who have known disappointment and despair as their constant companions**

 **For those who despise themselves and for those who despise others**

 **For those who know only failure**

 **For those whose lives have been shattered by tragedy**

 **For those who do not hear the song of the angels and**

 **For those who do not see the brilliance of the Christmas Star.**

**As we rejoice and celebrate in these gladsome days, let us find new strength that we might live and work for the day when peace shall truly be on earth and good will among all people the whole wide world around.**

**A Musical Meditation:** “Christmas in the Trenches”

 by John McCutcheon

sung by Roger Geery

**Homily:** “The Peace of Christmas”

**Offering and Offertory:** “The Peace of Christmas Day”

by Bob Beers

**Candle Lighting Ceremony:** from Morris W. Hudgins

**We are joined this evening by the light of candles. From light we have the symbol of warmth, of sharing, of newness of life, of enlightenment and hope in a world of tragedy and darkness.**

 **For Christians the light in the sky represents the birth of a new world religion by Jesus of Nazareth almost 2000 years ago. He moved people’s hearts in ages past and he moves people today.**

 **For others light can symbolize a new life ahead – a new relationship, a marriage, the birth of a child. It can even be a reminder of the significant persons that have died in this or other years.**

 **For all of us it can be a symbol of hope for a struggling world, health where there has been sickness. It can mean new insight, fresh beginnings, a new commitment to peace. For all these reasons we come together this evening, alone and together to share in the joy of the light.**

Share the light of potential with one another

Closing Words: from Sydney Wilde-Nugent

**We are here this Christmas Eve to be together,**

**To feel the warmth of human bodies –**

**A reassurance against the cold of this winter night.**

**We come to fill our eyes with the light of candles,**

**To fill our ears with the sounds of music,**

**To fill our hearts with the wonder of new hope –**

**Hope for the love of one another,**

**Hope for peace on earth with good will toward all.**

**Give us this night that inner peace which comes**

 **From the knowledge that we are not alone**

**But that we are here, together,**

 **Sharing common hopes,**

 **Common dreams,**

 **Common resolves.**

**Give us this night the joy and wonder which fill our souls with the knowledge**

**That we are a part of the interweaving patterns of the human and divine –**

**Each of us a spark of light in the Universe**

**Together, a brilliance which calls forth the promise of Bethlehem**

**Together, may we find the courage to realize that promise.**

**So Be It!**

**Closing Carol:** #251 ”Silent Night