



*St. Paul United Methodist Church
Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion
December 24, 2015*

Rev. Ellen Hopkins, Presider
Rebecca Wellman, Liturgist
Joe Cirou, Guest Organist
Rachel Wayte, Guitarist
Sherri, David, Spencer and Zander Scott,
Advent Liturgy

THE WORSHIP OF GOD

Call to Worship and Advent Candle Liturgy

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you

We gather to celebrate the birth of the one who is the light of the world.

We are here to worship God and his Son Jesus Christ, born this night in Bethlehem of Judea.

We light the candle of hope to remind us of the promises made by all the prophets that God would raise up a savior for his people Israel and through Him bless all the nations.

Let the heavens and the earth rejoice. Our Lord has come.

Light the first candle.

We light the candle of love to remind us that God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might have eternal life.

Let the heavens and the earth rejoice.

Our Lord has come.

Light the second candle.

We light the candle of joy to remind us that the Lord has made known his salvation and that grace is poured out upon us.

Let the heavens and the earth rejoice.

Our Lord has come.

Light the third candle.

We light the candle of peace to remind us that the Prince of Peace comes to enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Let the heavens and the earth rejoice.

Our Lord has come.

Light the fourth candle.

We light the Christ candle to celebrate and rejoice that the light of the world is born this night....

Light the Christ candle.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness - on them a light has shined. You, O Lord, have multiplied the nation. You have increased its joy. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder. He is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

**Glory be to God in the highest heaven, and on earth
peace to all people of good will. Alleluia!**

Prayer of Invocation

Almighty God, you have made this night holy by the gift of your Son, born of the Spirit and of Mary. Let His light shine within our hearts even more brightly than it shines from the candles in this place. Help us to hear your word and to celebrate your everlasting love through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

First Gospel Reading		<i>Luke 1:26-38</i>
Hymn	<i>It Came Upon a Midnight Clear</i>	UMH 218
Second Gospel Reading		<i>Luke 2:1-14</i>
Hymn	<i>The First Noel (v. 1-3)</i>	UMH 245
Third Gospel Reading		<i>Luke 2:15-20</i>
Hymn	<i>What Child Is This?</i>	UMH 219
Sermon		Rev. Ellen Hopkins

A Christmas Prayer

Let us affirm the love that God has for us—a love that was not, and cannot, be hindered.

We thank God for coming unto us; we praise Him for Christ's birth into our world.

It was cold and Mary and Joseph were fearful.

But that did not stop the birth.

And today we are still sometimes cold and fearful, certainly poor in many ways.

We often feel that we have no place and are unclear about what God wants of us.

But these things did not stop the birth of Jesus then, nor will they do it now. To all who are open to God's leading, He comes.

Lord Jesus, be born in us tonight.

The Giving of God's Tithes and Our Offerings

Christmas Communion Litany

The peace of the Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts to the Lord.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

A Christmas Confession (Walter Russell Bowie: *A Christmas Creed*)

I believe in Jesus Christ and the beauty of the gospel begun in Bethlehem.

I believe in the one whose spirit glorified a little town; and whose spirit still brings joy to people all over the world in towns both large and small.

I believe in the one for whom the crowded inn could find no room, and I confess that my heart still sometimes wants to exclude Christ from my life today.

I believe in the one whom the rulers of the earth ignored and the proud could never understand; whose life was among common people, whose welcome came from persons of hungry hearts.

I believe in the one who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible:

I believe in the one whose cradle was a mother's arms, whose modest home in Nazareth had love for its only wealth, who looked at people and made them see what God's love saw in them, who, by love, brought sinners back to purity, and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God.

I confess the many things that stand in the way of true celebration of God's love.

I confess those things in my life that have caused me to become separated from my god, my neighbors, and myself.

(silent prayer)

I confess my ever-lasting need of God:

The need of forgiveness for selfishness and greed, the need of new life for empty souls, the need of love for hearts grown cold.

I believe in God who gives us the best of himself.

I believe in Jesus, the son of the living god, born in Bethlehem this night, for me and for the world. I believe that in and through Him comes God's gift of forgiveness and new life, both here and in the world to come.

The Great Thanksgiving

On this night God's presence was seen as one of us:

a baby needy and naked,
wrapped in a woman's blood,
born into poverty and exile,
to proclaim the good news to the poor,
and to let the broken victims go free.

Therefore, with the woman who gave Jesus birth,
the woman who befriended him and fed him,
who argued with him and reached out to touch him;
the woman who anointed him for death,
the woman who met him in the garden,
and with all women and men throughout the ages, we praise God, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy, vulnerable God,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Again, on this night, we remember what our tradition teaches:
at the end of a journey, among friends, gathered round a table...
Jesus took bread, said a blessing, broke it and said,
'This is the bread of life, given
to sustain the people of the world'.

**Let us share this bread and be strengthened
to bring peace and justice to the world.**

Later he poured a cup of wine said a blessing and said,
'This is the cup of life, given
to sustain the people of the world'.

**Let us share this cup in solidarity
with all the peoples of the world, so that
peace and justice may prevail everywhere.**

Ever Present God, embrace us with your comfortable power.
Brood over these bodily things
and make us one body in community.

**As Mary's body was broken for him, and her blood shed,
so may we show forth his brokenness,
for the life of the world. Amen.**

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

Prayer of Thanksgiving after Communion

**Let us give thanks for this sharing in community.
May it sustains us in our desire to be followers of Jesus
in our own time and place.
Let us acknowledge that partaking of the bread and wine
joins us to a great company of people throughout history
and around the present world.
And let us renew our sense of belonging to this fellowship
as we seek to bring the words and ways of Jesus
into relevant connection with life
as we live and understand it today.**

**May true knowledge increase in our minds.
May compassion increase in our hearts.
May there be energy and strength for good actions that serve a suffering world.**

**And may peace be our portion
and the portion of all who live on this small planet
which is our human home.**

Hymn and Candle Lighting

Silent Night

*The congregation stands and forms a circle around the sanctuary as we light our candles
and sing:*

*Silent night! Holy Night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace!*

*Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,
Christ, the Saviour, is born!*

*Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.*

Benediction and Blessing

Communion liturgy and prayers © 2002-2005, Rev. Richard J. Fairchild.

