

Presider: Rev. Ellen Hopkins
Liturgist: Rebecca Wallace
Organist: Larry Stokes
Guitarist: Rachel Wayte
Advent Liturgy:
the Mitchell/Lindhahl family
Special Music by the Paulines

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.

Hymn *Once in Royal David's City* UMH 250

Lighting of the Christ Candle the Mitchell/Lindhahl family

Special Music *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* the Paulines

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 *Luke 1:1-7*

Hymn *Sing We Now of Christmas* the Paulines

Second Gospel Reading *Luke 2:8-14*

Hymn *O Little Town of Bethlehem* UMH 230

Third Gospel Reading

Luke 2:15-20

Hymn

What Child Is This?

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

Musical Offering

Still, Still, Still

Chancel Choir

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.

Let us proclaim our faith in God and in His son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, our brother, and our Savior.

We come before him, thankful for all his love and mercy.

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

Communion Music

On Christmas Night

Chancel Choir

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.

There will be no services Christmas Day. Enjoy the holiday with your family.

St. Paul United Methodist Church ▪ 501 Grant St. SE ▪ Atlanta, GA 30312
www.stpaulgrantpark.org ▪ 404-688-7501