

Straight from the "Hart"

**December 24, 2023 – Christmas Eve
The Arrival – Standing on the Promises
of Christmas**



Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are glad you are here and participating in worship through this service script.

Opening Prayer Heavenly Father, we have gathered to rejoice in the yearly festival of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ. As we relive the history of this night and what it means, grant that we who have received your redeeming light with joy may also be inspired to continue living in the confidence of your gracious love. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Responsive Call to Worship and Unison Affirmation

(P- Pastor, C – Reader with Congregation)

P: We long to realize the reality of hope in our day

C: for God has favored us with his presence and power.

P: We are alert, delightfully expecting his coming light.

C: for his compassion gives birth to his love within us and for each other.

P: Therefore, we celebrate that God's grace has come to be with us in Christ.

C: Grace that can save every person.

P: Grace that teaches us not to live against God and to not do the evil things the world wants to do. Grace that teaches us to live in the present age in a wise and right way—

C: a way that demonstrates that we serve God.

P: We live in his service while we wait for the coming of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

C: He is our great hope, and he will come with glory.

P: He came and was born to live and give himself for us; to free us from all evil. He died to make us a pure people who belong only to him

C: — people who are always wanting to be good and do good things.

P: We want and strive for this because

(Pastor, Reader, and Congregation together)

We believe in God whose light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never smother it.

We believe that on a night like this night in Bethlehem there was born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

We believe in the Word who has become incarnate, our very flesh and blood, yet full of grace and truth.

We believe in the blessed appearing of the salvation of our God, that is for the happiness of all people.

We believe in his name as Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace;

Of the increase of his rule and of his unique peace, there will be no end. The zeal of the God of hosts will do this. This we surely believe!

ad. from "I" to "We" — "I Do Believe" by Bruce Prewer,
posted on Bruce Prewer's Homepage.

Music So let's come into the presence of the King in a manger and adore him for all he has done, is doing, and is yet to do for humanity... Let's sing [Title].

O Come All Ye Faithful

Words: John F Wade, ca 1743 tr by Frederick Oakeley, 1841

Music: John F Wade, ca 1743, harm from Collections... 1792

1. O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;

Refrain:

- O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;
(Refrain)

4. See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;
(Refrain)

Music We believe in him and adore him because we have heard and hopefully experienced in our hearts, the birth and life of Christ within. We again celebrate the good news of Jesus' birth.

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

Words: 14th cent. Latin; trans. by John Mason Neale, 1855

Music: German Melody; harm. by Gary Alan Smith, 1988

1 Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say: News, news! Jesus Christ was born today.
Ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!

2 Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss: News, news! Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door, and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!

3 Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave: News, news! Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all to gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

Advent Candles

Review

And because he came to save us,

We are filled with hope, as we wait for the glorious return of our great God
and Savior Jesus Christ. Titus 2:13 (CEV)

Therefore, we lit the candle of hope. [Pastor Relights Candle 1]



Jesus said, “I am leaving you with a gift -- peace of mind and heart! And the peace I give isn’t fragile like the peace the world gives. So don’t be troubled or afraid. 1 Peter 1:8-9 (VOICE)

Therefore, we lit the candle of peace. [Pastor Relights Candle 2]

He also said, “I have said these things to you so that my joy will be in you and your joy will be complete. John 15:11 (CEB)

Therefore, we lit the candle of joy. [Pastor Relights Candle 3]

This is how we know what true love is: Jesus Christ gave his own life on the cross. He died on our behalf. So we too ought to give our lives for other believers. 1 John 3:16 (EASY)

Therefore we lit the candle of love. [Pastor Relights Candle 4]

Bible Reading 1

For all of the hope, peace, joy, and love we find in Christ, Paul and John say to us:

For us, there is one God, the Father who is the ultimate source of all things and the goal of our lives. And there is one Lord—Jesus the Anointed, *the Liberating King*; through Him all things *were created*, and by Him we are *redeemed*. His breath filled all things with a living, breathing light — A light that thrives in the depths of darkness, *blazes through murky bottoms*. It cannot and will not be quenched...

He entered our world, a world He made; yet the world did not recognize Him... But for all who did receive and trust in Him, He gave them the right to be *reborn as* children of God; He bestowed this birthright not by human power or initiative but by God’s will.

1 Corinthians 8:6, John 1:4-5, 10,12-13 (VOICE)

Poetic Reading

That will is expressed in a Christmas Story Poem

Before the earth was molded, before the dawn of man,
before there was a universe, God devised a plan.

He looked into the future, in the hearts of unborn men,
and saw only rebellion, disobedience and sin.

They would take the love he gave them and the freedom to decide,
then turn their lives against him in their selfishness and pride.

They seemed bent on destruction, determined to do wrong.
But saving sinners from themselves was God's plan all along.

"I will send a Rescuer to do what they can't do.
A sacrifice to pay the price, to make them clean and new.

"But only One is qualified to bear this heavy cost;
My spotless Son, the Holy One to die upon a cross."

Without hesitation Jesus stood up from his throne,
"I want to give my life for them; It is my task alone."

In eons past a plan was formed and sealed by God above.
A Savior came to set men free. And did it all for love.

The Christmas Story Poem by Jack Zavada

Prayer Dear God, we are so thankful for the birth of Jesus! We celebrate his birth, his life, his sacrifice for us, and his resurrection. We rejoice that we can have a personal relationship with him. We ask that you help us, even with all the busyness and bustle of this season, to live a life that reflects what you have done for us. Help us to honor you as we celebrate Christmas. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Music Now let's sing the "Advent Light the Candle Song"

Advent Song (Light the Advent Candle)

[Candle 4 is lit during the intro to the song]

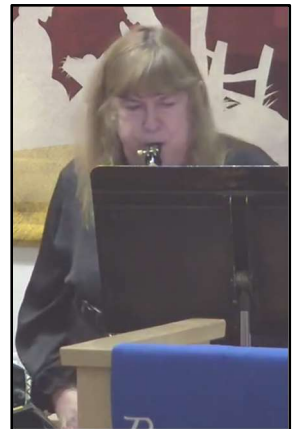
Words - Music: Mary Lu Walker © 1975 Mary Lu Walker

5. Light the Christmas candles, now: sing of donkey, sheep and cow;
birthday candles for the King, let the alleluias ring.
Candle, candle, burning bright, shining in the cold winter night;
Candle, candle, burning bright, fill our hearts with Christmas light.

Special Instrumental Music Listen now as Donna and Kathy play for us **Two French Carols (He is Born)**

Intro to and Bible Reading 2

This morning, you heard that Joseph and Mary were bound to be married. She became pregnant and Joseph was debating between his love for her and his love for the Law and what to do. An angel came and told him in a dream to not be afraid to take Mary as his wife for her pregnancy was conceived in her by the Holy Spirit. The angel continues his message to Joseph:



She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That's because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to bring about what the Lord had said would happen. He had said through the prophet, "The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) The name Immanuel means "God with us." Joseph woke up. He did what the angel of the Lord commanded him to do. He took Mary home as his wife. But he did not sleep with her until she gave birth to a son. And Joseph gave him the name Jesus.



Special Music What a special, sacred night it was, when the world is called on to humbly worship the newborn king. Hear it described by Mary Jo....

O Holy Night

Words: Placide Cappeau, tr. John Sullivan Dwight, 1855

Music: Adolphe Adams, 1847



1. O Holy night! The stars are brightly shining:
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining.
'Til He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope -- the weary world rejoices,
for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born!
O night, O holy night, O night divine!

2. Truly he taught us to love one another;
his law is love and his gospel is peace.
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,
and in his name, all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we;

Let all within us praise his holy name.
Christ is the Lord! O praise his name forever!
His power and glory evermore proclaim!
His power and glory evermore proclaim!
Christ is the Lord! O praise his name forever!
His power and glory evermore proclaim!
His power and glory evermore proclaim!
His power and glory evermore proclaim!

Music Let's continue singing about that night. Let's sing [Title].

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Text: Edmund H. Sears, 1849 Music: Richard Storrs Willis, 1850

1. It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.
2. Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains, they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.
3. And ye, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,
look now! for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!
4. For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.

Sermon Standing on the Promises of Christmas

We are standing on the promises of Christmas! The first promise is the birth of Christ himself, the ultimate revelation of who God is, the One who creates a transforming and adapting bridge so we can find our way back to God's love and not be destroyed in the process. That idea was fleshed out this morning. This adapting, adopting grace is made clear in two more promises that Sara read in the Bible earlier – promises that are found in the names.

Promise in a birth: Jesus is born as the bridge back to God

Going back to that same secular song I mentioned this morning, the lyrics go on to say "If God had a name, what would it be? What would you call [him] to his face if you were faced with him in all His glory?" ("One of Us" by Eric Bazilian, paraphrased) Does it matter how we answer that question? After all, Shakespeare taught us through another very young couple (although his couple was fictitious) probably about the same age as Joseph and Mary (who were historical). But they were both kind of teaching the same lesson, that the sub-

Promise in a name: Jesus – God is salvation

stance, the character and characteristics of a person are what counts, not their label. In the context of a feud between the Capulet and the Montague families, Shakespeare puts the lesson in the words of Juliet Capulet -- I'll modernize the language for those who aren't used to the Old English. She ponders her love for Romeo Montague.

O Romeo, why are you a Montague? Refuse your name, or if you can't, promise your love, and I'll no longer be a Capulet. It is only your name that is my enemy. You are yourself. It doesn't matter that you are a Montague. For what is a Montague – It is not a hand or foot or arm or face or any other part that belongs to a man. O be some other name. What is in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name, would smell as sweet. So Romeo, if you weren't called Montague, you would still be just as perfect. O take off your name, for it has nothing to do with who you are – and take all of me.

(Romeo - Juliet Act II Scene II)

Generally speaking, our culture follows that Shakespearean teaching. Even if we name our children by the meaning of the name, or after a relative or person we admire who we hope our children will be like – most people do not later think – “Oh you are named Chuck, so you are good for drill bits or gnawing wood.... You are not a certain kind of person just because of your name.”

But in other cultures and times, including Bible days, names and their meanings were a really big deal. That is why Jesus sometimes changed names of people as they followed him, and names were important in the Old Testament too. Sometimes the name was inspired by the condition of the mother during pregnancy and birth: One mother had a difficult childbirth and so named the child Leah (which means exhausted). Some were named for their appearance. Esau was named so because he was hairy, Korah was named that name it means bald and he was born bald). Some were named because of an incident surrounding their birth -- Isaac was named laughter because his mother laughed at the very concept of having a baby in her old age.

Isaiah named his children as a constant reminder of God's word to the people. His first and third son were named Shear-Jashub - "a remnant shall return" (self-explanatory), and – I'm going to do this one really slow: Mahershalalhashbaz (which means speed booty hurry plunder) meaning when people saw or called to

these boys, they would remember God's promise to his people that he would return them to their land and restore their fortunes.

Naming the child was still an extremely important part of the Jewish tradition in New Testament days --- and in our text today, the Christ babe, is given two names, and in this case, the names describe the hope he would bring to the world.

Joseph is angel-directed to name the child Jesus. Jesus was a quite popular name in the day, but that did not make it meaningless. The name means "God is salvation", and according to the angel, the salvation is from the power of sin in the lives of people. If we remember the name and its meaning, whenever we contemplate and call on Jesus, we are reminded of the promise of God's saving grace.

God sent Jesus to us – to move us from where we are, separated by sin from communion with God – to where we want and need to be – in connection with him in our daily life as well as in the kingdom to come. God saves us from the dark kingdom, the rule of sin's darkness in our hearts, and delivers us into the kingdom of light through Jesus.

On a previous laptop of mine, I used to connect to the ever-present world wide web. At times, even though it was reading a good signal, it refused to connect no matter what strategy I tried. Then I would finally remember that on the front edge of that laptop, even though glowing blue when on, it was obscured by the low position and receding angle of the computer's design, you couldn't really see that there was a switch there that disabled the wireless capability – you could turn it on and off. And it was a computer I carried back and forth between home and the office, so it was not unusual for the switch to get bumped without knowing it. And because it was out of sight out and out of mind, I took me forever to remember to remember that that button was there and why I was not getting on the internet.

Jesus is the switch that gives us access to the heavenly kingdom. If he is not "on" in our life, all we can get is a message that reads "Unable to connect". He is our access point to the kingdom of light and love. He is our power that enables us to surf the golden highways of heaven. Does Jesus ever get relegated to such an insignificant spot that we cannot see him? where his light glows so dimly that he is, for all practical purposes -- out of sight, out of mind, irrelevant – until our life drives us to want and need to connect and call on his name again?

Luther Bridgers sums up the impact of his name on our life when he wrote: All my life was wrecked by sin and strife, discord filled my heart with pain. Jesus swept

across the broken strings, stirred the slumbering chords again. Tho' sometimes he leads thro' waters deep, trials fall across the way, tho' sometimes the path seems rough and steep, see his footprints all the way. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, sweetest name I know, fills my every longing, keeps me singing as I go. His name was Jesus. Matthew adds the name, Emmanuel.

The secular song repeats the refrain throughout the song -- "God is great... God is good ... What if God was one of us? Just a [common person] like one of us." ("One of Us" by Eric Bazilian [paraphrased])

**Promise in a name: Emmanuel –
God is with us**

Matthew the gospel writer would shoot back an answer, "He was one of us!" and to back up the promise of salvation, Matthew adds an additional name in our final verses:

Between Isaiah's first and third son, he predicted the birth of another named Immanuel as an assuring sign – during very troubled times, it did not take a prophet to see the writing on the wall – that the great Assyrian Empire would be coming to destroy them. Isaiah said the Empire of the Euphrates River would (metaphorically) flood the nation, their army would "spread its wings" and darkness would cover the land. However, it did take a prophet like Isaiah to name a son Immanuel in the midst of all of that -- so that in these horrific times that were coming, his son's name meant God was with them and they could never be totally defeated... God promises return from exile and restoration of the land – a reminder that all this would happen because *God is with his people*.

Matthew picks up on his words and sees Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy and added this symbolic name into the mix. How more can God be with his people than coming as a human to live among them in the midst of their sinful mess and offer them a real solution – offer us a real solution...

When it comes right down to it, we are probably less concerned with the theology that God is everywhere in the world than we are with knowing that God is where we are. It is probably less important to us to know the abstract truth that God can be "accessed" from anywhere than it is to know that God will hear us wherever it is that we happen to be. We probably should be less concerned with the historical truth that Jesus was born halfway across the world in Bethlehem 2000 plus years ago than that he can be born afresh in our hearts again this Christmas season, tonight. The message of Jesus' symbolic name, Emmanuel, is not that God is everywhere, though that is true, but that God is here -- with us -- where we are.

As I go through my daily activities, are they different if I am more aware of God's presence with me? Are you different when you are more aware of God's presence with you as you go through your day? Does his watchful presence make us nervous, resentful, fearful, untrusted? Or does his presence motivate and inspire us to be our best, to risk a spiritually adventurous life because his grace-filled presence is a safety net that saves us from making mistakes by his intervening guidance, and/or catches us when we do happen to fail. Life works best for us, I believe, when we seek to be our best for God and His kingdom; and knowing his presence is with us motivates us to do that.

I hope we are learning to see God as one who watches with a loving, grace filled salvation in mind... who does all in his power to keep us away from the temptations that prevent us from being all we can be as people -- and transforms us by the power of the Spirit, enabling us to overcome the negative aspects of our life and to live victoriously. This is why he came -- at Christmas,

Special Music and it is why we will want to make room for him. Charles is going to come and remind us to open our hearts for his coming to us again this year. Mary Jo will add some harmony...

Make Room

by Casting Crowns

Words - Music: John Mark Hall, Matt Mahar

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A family hiding from the storm found no place at the keeper's door.
It was for this a Child was born to save a world so cold and hollow.

The sleeping town, they did not know lying in a manger low
a Savior King who had no home has come to heal our sorrows.

Chorus

Is there room in your heart? Is there room in your heart?
 Is there room in your heart for God to write his story?
 Shepherds counting sheep at night do not fear the glory light.
 You are precious in his sight, God has come to raise the lowly.

Chorus

You can come as you are, but it may set you apart
 when you make room in your heart and trade your dreams for his glory.
 Make room in your heart, make room in your heart.

Mother holds the promise tight, every wrong will be made right.
 The road is straight, the burden's light for in his hands, he holds tomorrow.

Chorus

You can come as you are but it may set you apart
 When you make room in your heart and trade your dreams for His glory.
 Make room in your heart, make room in your heart.
 Make room in your heart, make room in your heart.

Communion

Invitation Jesus promises us that if we make room in our hearts for him, some day he will make room for us in heaven by his side, and until that day, he is with us always, in our hearts.

Music Let's invite him, through song, to come to us, to our lives, to our world... binding us together in his great love.

O Come, O Come, Emanuel

Words: 9th cent., Latin, vv 1,7ab tr. The Hymnal, 1940
 v 2 tr. Henry Sloane Coffin, 1916 vv 4, 7cd tr. Laurence Stookey, 1986
 Music: 15th cent. French; arr. and harm. by Thomas Helmore, 1854
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1. O Come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
 that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
 Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee O Israel.
2. Oh come, thou wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
 to us the path of knowledge show and cause us in her ways to go.
 Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee O Israel.
4. O Come thou Root of Jesse's tree, and ensign of thy people be;
 before thee rulers silent fall; all peoples on thy mercy call.
 Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee O Israel.
7. O Come, Desire of nations bind all peoples in one heart and mind.

From dust thou brought us forth to life; Delivers us from earthly strife.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee O Israel.

Invitation (cont)

If that is your hope -- to follow his call, to embrace his values, to unite in desire to work for Christ, for hope, for peace, for joy, for love -- in the hearts of people everywhere, then he invites us to this covenant meal, and you can feel free to participate in Communion. For many people, there is no more dramatic action that can be taken to recognize that we abide in Christ, and he abides in us than in the sacrament of Communion. And yet we must confess that at times we do not abide as much as we would like to. Let's pray.

Confession Lord, we confess that too often, much like early Bethlehem, if we find room for you at all, it is in some insignificant corner of our heart -- a back shed -- where we hope that you will not do too much to disrupt living our life the way we want to live it.

We use the excuse that there is not enough room for you when there is plenty of space, yet you still come to us where we are in our daily doings -- like the shepherds who discovered your message while they were busy on the job.

We make the excuse that we do not have time for you when there is plenty of time for what we really want -- and it seems like when we do carve out that time, the rest of the important things of the day seem to fall into place and happen so much more effectively. We make many and varied excuses, but ultimately, we must recognize that we fear letting you in -- lest our personal preferences get lost rather than enhanced by your presence, we imagine we have to miss out and settle for less, when in fact when you are shaping our lives, we become so much more than we ever thought possible.

For when we follow our excuses, we find we are living in a wilderness of our own making. Life doesn't work like we hope it could or should. Awaken us, Lord, to the fact that you are not bound by space or time, and especially that, when we are stripped down to the essence of our life, your preference for us is not the barren emptiness of the wilderness, but for us to emerge in a blooming, flourishing garden of Eden -- where the tree of life is fed by streams of living water, and there is nothing but healing and encouragement.

Assurance of Forgiveness

So we receive your gracious life as we prioritize making room and time for your pleasure in our life. That is where and when we experience your peace through your gentle mercy. Through the birth and death and resurrection of Christ you reconcile us to God.

Music Therefore, on this Christmas Eve Communion night, we again express the confidence that you are with us, and we are your people, and as your people who carry your love in our hearts, we realize that how we live is to reveal something of who you are. Let's continue preparing our heart for this covenant connection by singing Emmanuel.

Emmanuel

Words and Music: Bob McGee, 1976
© 1976 C.A. Music (div. of Christian Arts Corp.)

Emmanuel, Emmanuel,
his name is called, Emmanuel.
God with us, revealed in us,
his name is called Emmanuel.
(Repeat)

The Great Thanksgiving

Tonight's Communion words will have some spoken responses and singing responses. We sang *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* a few minutes ago. When I sing a verse to that tune at various points during the liturgy, you will join me on the chorus as a response. Your part is in bold print. Let's start by simply singing the chorus we get the feel of it. It is all acappella (I am safer that way ... 😊 😊)

♪ Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel will come to thee O Israel. ♪

Very good. Let's begin the part of Communion that is called The Great Thanksgiving.

[♪ (to tune of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel) ♪]

The Lord be with you as we gather here
Lift up your hearts unto the Lord your God.
For it is right to give God our praise.
Let us prepare our hearts for coming days:

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

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. You created light out of

darkness and brought forth life on the earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets.

[♫ (to tune of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel) ♫]

You created all things and called them good,
Made us like you, but we cast off your love.

You set us free and claimed us as yours,
Through sage and prophet spoke to us your word.

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

In the fullness of time, you gave your only Son Jesus Christ to be our Savior, and at his birth the angels sang glory to you in the highest and peace to your people on earth.

[♫ (to tune of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel) ♫]

O Holy God of power and might,
Bless'd be the one who comes in your name,
Hosanna in the highest, God!
Hosanna in excelsis.

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

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

As Mary and Joseph went from Galilee to Bethlehem and there found no room, so Jesus went from Galilee to Jerusalem and was despised and rejected. As in the poverty of a stable Jesus was born, so by the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

[♫ (to tune of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel) ♫]

Holy are you and blessed is your Son,
Jesus, the Light, your presence here with us.
You sent him in the fullness of time,
He came to preach good news to all.

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

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and forever.

[♫ (to tune of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel) ♫]

Spirit of God descend upon us now,
And make these gifts become for us
The body and the blood of Christ
A holy, living sacrifice

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

And now, with the confidence of the children of God, let us sing **The Lord's Prayer**

As your Word became flesh, born of woman, on that night long ago, so,

[♫ (to tune of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel) ♫]

And on the night he was betrayed,
Christ took the bread, and unto you gave thanks
He broke the bread and shared it with friends.
"Take, eat, my body giv'n for you."

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

Jesus said, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.

"Do this in remembrance of me."

[Take and eat]



[♫ (to tune of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel) ♫]

After the meal he lifted up the cup,
 "My blood, my life, I pour it out for you.
 This covenant I make anew.
 Set free from sin! Remember me!"

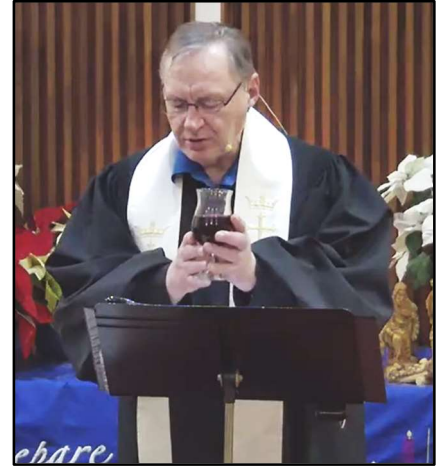
Rejoice, Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Jesus said, "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [Take and drink]

[♫ (to tune of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel) ♫]

We thank you God of Mystery
 For sacred meal, community.
 Send us forth now to share your light,
 Disciples of the One of Peace!

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



Special Music God has come and made himself available to us, but he doesn't force himself upon us, we must seek him, go to him, and follow the signs he gives us... Charles is going to sing for us:

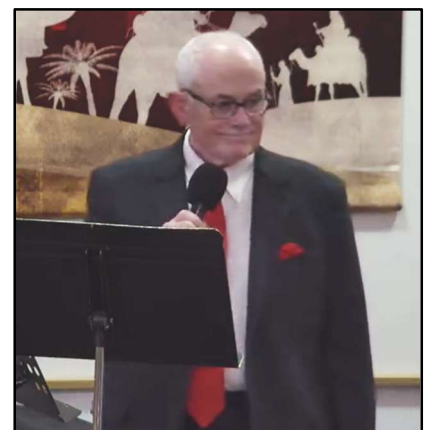
Follow the Star

by Paul Baloche Words-Music: Rita Baloche, © Integrity Music, 2013

In the quiet of the night under the wide expanse of sky
 I am alone and asking questions... why
 What's this longing in my heart,
 What's the reason for my life
 And this solitary light is shining, calling

Chorus

Follow that star, follow that star
 uncover the mystery of Who You are
 I've searched for a lifetime, I've come from afar
 And discovered my destiny is to follow that star



Like the light of early dawn I see the promise there beyond
 And a hope within begins to rise
 Love is calling to my heart reaching deep into my soul
 And reveals to me the reason for living

Chorus

What joy, what hope, what good news he brings to me and you

Chorus

[So I] Chorus

Follow that star, follow that star

Follow that star, follow that star

Candle Music

And as we follow the star and find our destiny and our reason for living, and how that plays out in day to day following, Paul says that our lives will shine out like stars, bringing light to a dark world. Jesus too says we are the light of the world, because he is the Light of the world. It is his light that began in Bethlehem that shines in us and through us to our world today... it is what these candles (that you now hold) represent. Lets stand if comfortable and sing as we darken the room and light our candles...

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Words: Phillips Brooks, ca. 1868, Music: Lewis H. Redner, 1868

1. O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;
above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.

Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

4. O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!



Silent Night

Words: Joseph Mohr, 1818 sts 1,2,3 tr by John F Young st 4 anon

Music: Franz Gruber 1818

1. 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.
2. Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!
3. 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, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.
4. Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light;
with the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!



Conclusion and Blessing In the birth of adapting, adopting grace; and the double naming of Jesus, we have three promises that no matter where we go or what we go through, Jesus will be present with us -- bringing his salvation. In 1 John 4 we read that "... the Father sent his Son as Savior of the world. Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God's Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God." (1 John 4:14-15 (MSG)) [Raises hands for blessing] As we go, we can stand on these promises of Christmas because God's love is ever faithful, ever strong, and through his saving grace we can carry on. We pray in this holy season we might all join our hearts in praise, that God's Christ might touch us all, and through us, everyone we meet. Amen.