



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.



VIDEO: “Do You Hear What I Hear”

Biancha Martinelli

GREETING:

Pastor Clarissa

Christmas is filled with sounds that warm the heart, lift the spirit, and prepare us for what many describe as “the most wonderful time of the year.” What we hear at Christmas often brings hope. The advent of Jesus brought sounds, greetings, and conversations that were anticipated yet unexpected. His grand entrance into the world was not met with a spectacular parade. The surprising truth behind Jesus’ birth is that few were listening. Allow Christmas to awaken your ability to hear. The beauty of Christmas is that it is God’s grand invitation to hear from him again. He loves. He sees. He came.

Centering Music:

John Abuya

JOY & ME: “STORY TIME”**LIGHTING THE CENTER CANDLE ON CHRISTMAS EVE: “A POWERFUL SYMBOLISM THAT CHRIST IS HERE AND HE IS PRESENT.”**

Debra Matthies

We come to know you, Holy One, as Wisdom Incarnate, as Flickering Flame, as Spirit of Life, as Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, Enfleshed. You come to us as the Stranger, and the Strange. Often, we do not recognize you. Often, we turn away from your gifts and your demands. Yet you come to us in Wilderness, in the Impossible Made Possible, in Silence and Singing and Sighs Too Deep for Words. You abhor dominance, mastery, fear, and control. You are made known to us in Vulnerability, and Courage, and Divesting from the Powers of Empire. We come to you this Advent in need, with longing, in pain, captive to fear, desiring a more just world, a more livable life for all of us, for the earth, for every living thing caught and held in this inescapable network of mutual interdependence we call this one wild and precious Life. We long for you. We long for healing. We long for liberation. We long for different systems and patterns of relating.

And so, this Advent, we pause. We breathe. We pray. We dig deep. We reach out. We rise up. We remember. We vision. We sit with the pain. We stay with the trouble. We wait, expectant. We light candles. We labor. We open to You, and to one another, and to the Sacred Mystery that is Emmanuel, God-With-Us, Love Incarnate, Divinity Enfleshed.

Advent hope moves us; Advent love leads us; Advent joy stirs us; Advent peace stills us, that we might affirm our King Jesus.

It is time we set flame to this Advent affirmation by lighting the Christ Candle.

(Light the four outside candles then the center, Christ candle)

Our Christian Affirmation: (Unison)

We believe that Jesus is the Son of God. He was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea. He was the long-awaited Messiah who is coming was prophesied. The same Jesus lives today in our hearts. He deserves our highest loyalty and total commitment. In Jesus Christ, our hope is fulfilled; our love is consummated; our joy is complete; and our peace is sealed.

HYMN:**TFWS 2095: “Star Child”****CALL TO WORSHIP:** (Adapted from Latin antiphon, Hodie Christus natus est)

Debra Matthies

On this night, Christ is born!

Now the Savior has appeared!

On this night, the heavenly chorus resounds!

All creation rejoices!
On this night, the church throughout the world joins their cry:
Glory to God in the highest! Alleluia!

UHM 240: “Hark the Herald Angels Sing”

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION (adapted from Lessons and Carols)

Debra Matthies

God of Surprising Love and Hope, we come this evening to the manger, gazing lovingly on the Child born to bring hope to the world. Open our hearts tonight as we hear the story anew. Help us to be guided by the Light of Jesus Christ, that we may truly feel the power of your love and bring that love, with joy, to all we meet. Open us, O God, to hear again the message of the angels, and to go in heart and mind with the shepherds to Bethlehem to see the glorious redemption, you have brought to pass through the Newborn lying in a manger. **Amen.**

~THE PROPHECY OF THE MESSIAH~

Pastor Clarissa

Isaiah 9:2 - The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Emmanuel, Emmanuel, God with us, Emmanuel.

~THE COMING OF JESUS IS ANNOUNCED TO MARY AND JOSEPH~

Debra Matthies

Luke 1:35-38 The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

~THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE BIRTH OF JESUS~

Debra Matthies

Luke 2:1-5 - 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.

O Little Town of Bethlehem:
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 street shineth the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

~JESUS IS BORN~

Debra Matthies

Luke 2:6-7 - While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 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 place for them in the inn.

Away in a Manger
Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky look down where He lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

UMH 238: “Angels We Have Heard on High”

CHRISTMAS EVE HOMILY:

“Even with a Pandemic - Nothing New to Say for Christmas Eve, 2020”

Pastor Clarissa

PASTORAL PRAYER:

God of bright and shining stars, we come this evening with the reminiscences of the old, old story in our hearts. For many here, the story has been heard numerous times, flooding their lives with warmth and love; For others the story is new, surprising, causing wonder and surprise. All around us are symbols and reminders of the miraculous Birth. We see the greens which remind us of your eternal presence and love for us. The candles shed their glowing light helping us to remember the many ways in which you have brightened our lives and offered light to our journey. The colors, the music, and aromas, the people, invite us again into your wonderful presence in the world in the birth of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

In this world in which your holy land is in such turmoil, shed your light anew, that your healing Love may bring Peace and Hope to people in conflict. We ask that you protect all those who are in harm’s way; all those who live lives of anguish, poverty, oppression. We ask your loving presence to be with those who refuse to believe in you; who see your word through the church as a tradition, but see very little impact in their daily lives. Let the Light of Jesus Christ penetrate that darkness of alienation and bring Hope and Peace to all your people.

May the light of the stars which sparkled in those dark skies, again illuminate our lives, guiding, healing, leading us to you, Blessed God. As we gather in this time and place, hearing the story of the birth, remind us again that you are born continually in our lives. In gratitude we offer our praise and our love to you. And the people of God respond, **Amen.**

A SONG FOR THE WORLD!

Debra Matthies & Pastor Clarissa

Gentle tunes and soothing words that touch the soul: The magic of “Silent Night” has remained uninterrupted for more than 200 years. A song that promises consolation and gives hope. Over and over again. For centuries, the song has crossed borders and overcome crises. It connects people no matter their origin, age, or religion, and provides a link back to the time during which it was created. Today, the song is performed in over 300 languages and dialects.

Sorrow and hope. These are the feelings that characterize these days leading to Christmas 2020 amidst the pandemic. The year that is coming to an end has been marked by suffering but also by the commitment of so many people to help those who are suffering. I think the problems and the sufferings of this year will even help us focus on the message of hope and Christmas. What is it? It is God who comes to us. We will never be alone. Emmanuel: God with us. And other things that are with us will disappear: the investments, the achievements, the gifts, our money... will all disappear. All these things that we have associated with Christmas may disappear. But Jesus who comes as one of us, God with us, will remain with us forever. So that is our hope. And so, I wish every family, each of you, and, especially those who feel alone and abandoned and yet moved by Hope, a very “Merry Christmas” on this blessed “Silent Night”.

We have watched; we have waited in hope. Light the first candle for peace. Light the second candle. in joy! Light the third candle. with love. Light the fourth candle. Now our redemption draws near! Lift up your eyes and look around; wherever the Spirit takes you, look for the light and follow Jesus. The grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **Amen.**

UMH 239 “Silent Night! Holy Night!”

Video—<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyY36DJmIcs>

POSTLUDE:

John Abuya