



Prayer

**Good and gracious God, on this holy night you gave us your Son, the Lord of the universe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, the Savior of all lying in a manger. On this holy night, draw us into the mystery of your love. Join our voices with the heavenly choir that we may sing to your glory. Help us to find our place among the shepherds so that we too, may welcome Christ in our hearts as Savior and Lord. Amen.**

\*Carol 41 *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

ADESTE FIDELES

**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.*

**Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!**

*Refrain*

**Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation!  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!**

*Refrain*

Greeting

Isaiah 9: 2-7 The Prophet Isaiah Tells of the Coming Messiah

Solo Violin Meditation: The Seasons: *Largo* (from *Winter*) Antonio Vivaldi

Micah 5:2-5a The Prophet Tells Micah of a Ruler from Bethlehem

Solo Magnificat: Johann Sebastian Bach  
*Esurientes implevit bonis* (The hungry have been filled with good things.)  
*Luke 1:53*)

Luke 1:26-38 The Angel Gabriel Visits the Virgin Mary

Carol 16 *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came* GABRIEL'S MESSAGE

**The angel Gabriel from heaven came,  
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;  
“All hail,” said he, “O lowly maiden Mary,”  
Mostly highly favored lady, Gloria!**

**“For a blessed mother you shall be,  
All generations praise continually,  
You Son shall be Emmanuel, be seers foretold.”  
Mostly highly favored lady, Gloria!**

**Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,  
“To me be as it pleases God,” she said,  
“My soul shall laud and magnify God’s holy name.”  
Mostly highly favored lady, Gloria!**

**Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ was born  
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,  
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say:  
Mostly highly favored lady, Gloria!**

Luke 2: 1-7 Jesus Is Born at Bethlehem

**Angels we have heard on high, singing sweetly o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.**

*Refrain: Gloria, in excelsis Deo!  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*

**Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heavenly song?**

*Refrain*

**Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.**

*Refrain*

Luke 2: 8-20 The Birth Is Announced to Shepherds

**Sheep fast asleep, there on a hill, grass for their bed; all is still.  
Cold winter night, the frost appears; shepherds keep watch by their  
fire.  
Soft there a sound, far, far away; is it the stream? Winds at play?  
Nay, friend, it is the heavenly choir, singing throughout the spheres.**

**Star in the sky, shining so bright, silent and pure, wondrous light!  
What tidings bring it Israel? Can we new hope in it find?  
Good news it brings! Fear not, I pray! Born is God's son, born today!  
God's gift of love to all the earth, our lord, Immanuel.**

**Glory to God! Glory on high! Sing you Noel! Day is nigh!  
All you who dwell on earth below, peace be to you, and good will.  
Come, let us go to Bethlehem; follow the star, seeking him.  
Let us adore and worship still, in love and joy to grow.**



**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 Savior is born, Christ the Savior 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, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.**

The Word Made Flesh

In the beginning was the Word,  
**and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**  
All things came into being through him.  
**and without him not one thing came into being.**  
What came into being in him was life,  
**and the life was the light of all people.**  
The light shines in the darkness,  
**and the darkness did not overcome it.**  
To all who received him, who believed in his name,  
**he gave power to become children of God,**  
And the Word became flesh and lived among us,  
**We have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son,  
full of grace and truth.**  
No one has ever seen God.  
**God's only son, who is close to the Father's heart,  
has made him known.**

--from John 1

**Joy to the world! the Lord is come:  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare him room,  
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.**

**Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!  
Let us our songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make his blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as the curse is found.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of his righteousness,  
And wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,  
And wonders, wonders of his love.**

\*Benediction

\*Postlude: In Dulci Jubilo

Johann Sebastian Bach

\*Those who are able, please stand.

Welcome to the Festival of the Nativity at First Church. From the ministers and staff of First Church comes the fond hope that the celebration of the birth of Christ may be for you a time of reflection and renewal. May God grant you a joyous Christmas and a blessed New Year.

The Christmas Eve offering has been designated for two causes: *Koinonia Primary Care* on Clinton Avenue which provides medical treatment and healthcare resources that include the healing power of prayer; and *Heifer International* which works with communities to end hunger and poverty and care for the earth. With gifts of livestock and training Heifer projects help families improve their nutrition and generate income in sustainable ways.

Candle Lighters: Nicole Marsh-Sivaslian, Oasia West, Stephen Reohr, Whitney Ballou, Kate Wuerstlin, Daquail West.

Preacher: The Rev. John D. Paarlberg.

Readers: Andrew Mondore, Marilyn Paarlberg, Joline Mondore, Colin Parmalee.

Instrumentalists: Merideth and Lark Parmalee, viola; Kate Goldstein and Liz Silver, violins; Mary Bon: Organist/Choir Director

Soloist: Lucille Beer, Contralto.

You can listen to tonight's worship service and past worship services on the web at [www.firstchurchinalbany.org](http://www.firstchurchinalbany.org) CD recordings of the service are also available by contacting the church office.

Do you have a family heirloom bell? An old cow bell? A simple hanging-around-the-house bell? Bring your bells to Christmas Day. Come and celebrate the joy of Christmas by singing carols and ringing bells. If you have a bell to share, bring it! We'll have some extra bells if you can't bring a bell of your own.

Music text:

**I Wonder as I Wander**

I wonder as I wander out under the sky, How Jesus, the Savior, did come for to die. For  
poor ornery people like you and like I. I wonder as I wander...

When Mary birthed Jesus, 'twas in a cow's stall, With wise men and farmers and  
shepherds and all. But high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,  
And the promise of ages it then did recall.

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing: A star in the sky, or a bird on the wing;  
Or all of God's angels in heaven to sing, He surely could have it, 'Cause he was the King.

I wonder as I wander out under the sky,....