



December 13, 2020  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent

GATHERING Heather Hinton

GREETING Darren Cushman Wood

ANNOUNCEMENTS Diane Gattone

PRELUDE *Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying* arr. A. Miller

CALL TO WORSHIP Darren Cushman Wood

Leader: Not in the mighty places of power,  
but in little Bethlehem, in a room out back:

**People: The Messiah is coming.**

Leader: Not born in nobility and wealth,  
but of Mary and Joseph, who toiled and trusted:

**People: The Messiah is coming.**

Leader: Not announced by priests and kings,  
but by two women, who were the first to know:

**People: The Messiah is coming.**

Leader: Nothing will be impossible for God,  
but when and where we least expect it,  
look among the straw and the stars:

**People: The Messiah is coming.**

OPENING HYMN #220 *Angels from the Realms of Glory*

***Angels from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;  
ye who sang creation's story now proclaim Messiah's birth:***

***Refrain: Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king.***

***Sages, leave your contemplations, brighter visions beam afar;  
seek the great Desire of nations; ye have seen his natal star: [Refrain]***

***Saints, before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear;  
suddenly the Lord, descending, in his temple shall appear: [Refrain]***

ADVENT CANDLES The Wright Family

Pastor: We light these candles as a sign of the coming of Christ, the Light of the World.  
May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.  
May those who go out weeping come home with shouts of joy.

Leader: May the joy of God fill our hearts with the assurance of redemption.  
**[Refrain] O come, O come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel. Rejoice, rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Aida Haddad

FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me;  
God has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the broken-hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord, to display God's glory.  
They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

For I the Lord love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.  
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.  
I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for God has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
and covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

Leader: This is the Word of God for the people of God.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

SOLO

*Angels Christmas Medley*

arr. G. Lanier  
Cheri Brightman, alto saxophone

Leader: When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.

**People: Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;**

Leader: then it was said among the nations,  
'The Lord has done great things for them.'

**People: The Lord has done great things for us,  
and we rejoiced.**

Leader: Restore our fortunes, O Lord,  
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

**People: May those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy.**

Leader: Those who go out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,

**People: shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves.**

## HYMN OF PRAYER #217

*Away in a Manger*

***Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.  
Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay close by me forever, and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in your tender care, and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.***

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

## PRAYER OF DEDICATION

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

## SOLO

*Guard Him, Joseph*

S. DeFord

Ron Berry, baritone; Cheri Brightman, saxophone

Guard him, Joseph, as He slumbers, here behind the stable doors,  
let no errant sound distress Him, tread thou softly on the floor.  
Linger watchful round the manger; hush thy voice and still the beasts,  
for thou hast within thy keeping Christ, the infant Prince of Peace.

Guard Him, Joseph, through the darkness; watching o'er Him till the dawn,  
bid the shepherds enter meekly, stand in wonder, gaze in awe.  
Trim thy lamp and shield thy candle; see they burn all through the night,  
for thou hast within thy keeping Christ, the everlasting Light.

Guard Him, Joseph, from all danger; keep thy vigil nigh His bed,  
let no harm nor grief befall Him; stand thou in a father's stead.  
When his mother's arms be weary, hold Him gently as thine own,  
for thou hast within thy keeping God's own well-beloved Son.

## DOXOLOGY #94

*Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow*

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Praise God, the source of all our gifts!***

***Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!  
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!***

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel',

which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Leader: This is the Word of God for the people of God.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

*The Improvisation*

Darren Cushman Wood

HYMN OF DEDICATION #238

*Angels We Have Heard on High*

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

***See him in a manger laid, whom the choirs of angels praise;  
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while our hearts in love we raise.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!***

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING

Leader: Rejoice always,  
pray without ceasing,  
give thanks in all circumstances;

**People: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus.**

Leader: May the God of peace make you holy through and through;  
and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless  
at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**People: The one who calls us is faithful, and God will do this. Amen.**

POSTLUDE

*Toccata on O Little Town of Bethlehem*

R. Lind

*The flowers on the altar today are given for the glory  
of God and in memory of my parents, Joe and Lora Hill,  
who were married December 8, 1912 and were long  
time members of North Church, by Katy Meredith.*

*The white flower on the altar is in memory of  
John Ruby who passed away December 5<sup>th</sup>.*

**This week's worship leaders:**

Darren Cushman Wood, *Senior Pastor*  
Diane Gattone, *Pastor of Care & Nurture*  
John Hague & Dick Tiller-Luchtman, *Audio Visual*  
Aida Haddad, *Liturgist*  
Heather Hinton, *Organist*  
Ron Berry, *Soloist*  
Cheri Brightman, *Saxophone*