



First United Methodist Church of Torrance

Online Church in Worship

December 24, 2025

PRELUDE - Hani

First Noel
Arr. John Stainer
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LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

Reader 1: Tonight, we gather to remember with the prophet Isaiah:
For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Great will be his authority, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Congregation: We gather to once again bask in the glory that visited a stable and a manger, shepherds watching their flocks, and a young couple cradling the newborn Messiah.

Reader 2: We light the Christ candle as a sign of the glory that came among us in unexpected places and to unexpected people, that we may be people who seek and follow the glory of the Christ child here and now.

(Light the Christ candle of the Advent wreath.)

WELCOME & CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Beloved, on this night, we gather to enliven the story once again of God who came to dwell among us as a vulnerable baby.

All: **We rejoice in the day that all the earth awaits.**

Leader: We remember the stable, the animals, and the manger that witnessed the arrival of Emmanuel, God with us.

All: **We rejoice in the day that all the earth awaits.**

Leader: We recall the angels who announced the Messiah's birth to the shepherds, those most unlikely witnesses of God's glory.

All: **We rejoice in the day that all the earth awaits.**

Leader: In our remembering and enlivening, we gather today as people of God's promise, witnesses to God's glorious presence among us in the vulnerable, forgotten, and tucked away places of the world.

All: We gather to rejoice in the day that all the earth awaits, the day that has already come and will yet be. Thanks be to God! Amen.

(Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries)

THE REAL CHRISTMAS STORY FROM THE BIBLE

The scripture narration from *The Message Bible*.

The Prophecy

HYMN NO. 211 – O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v. 1)

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain

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

O Come O Come Emmanuel (Veni Emmanuel)

Henry Sloane Coffin | Laurence Hull Stookey | Thomas Helmore

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SCRIPTURE READING – Isaiah 9:2-7 (*The Message Bible*)

- 2 The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light.
For those who lived in a land of deep shadows—
light! sunbursts of light!
- 3 You repopulated the nation,
you expanded its joy.
Oh, they're so glad in your presence!
Festival joy!
The joy of a great celebration,
sharing rich gifts and warm greetings.
- 4 The abuse of oppressors and cruelty of tyrants—
all their whips and cudgels and curses—
Is gone, done away with, a deliverance
as surprising and sudden as Gideon's old victory over Midian.
- 5 The boots of all those invading troops,
along with their shirts soaked with innocent blood,

- Will be piled in a heap and burned,
a fire that will burn for days!
- 6 For a child has been born—for us!
the gift of a son—for us!
He'll take over
the running of the world.
His names will be: Amazing Counselor,
Strong God,
Eternal Father,
Prince of Wholeness.
- 7 His ruling authority will grow,
and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings.
He'll rule from the historic David throne
over that promised kingdom.
He'll put that kingdom on a firm footing
and keep it going
With fair dealing and right living,
beginning now and lasting always.
The zeal of GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies
will do all this.

CHOIR RESPONSE

Glory to God in the Highest

Jay Althouse

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SCRIPTURE READING – Isaiah 11:1–5 (*The Message Bible*)

- 1 A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump,
from his roots a budding Branch.
- 2 The life-giving Spirit of GOD will hover over him,
the Spirit that brings wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit that gives direction and builds strength,
the Spirit that instills knowledge and Fear-of-GOD.
- 3 Fear-of-GOD
will be all his joy and delight.
He won't judge by appearances,
won't decide on the basis of hearsay.
- 4 He'll judge the needy by what is right,
render decisions on earth's poor with justice.
His words will bring everyone to awed attention.
A mere breath from his lips will topple the wicked.
- 5 Each morning he'll pull on sturdy work clothes and boots,
and build righteousness and faithfulness in the land.

MESSAGE***The Conception*****SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 1:26-38 (*The Message Bible*)**

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth 27 to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the virgin's name, Mary. 28 Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her:

Good morning!
You're beautiful with God's beauty,
Beautiful inside and out!
God be with you.

29 She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. 30 But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: 31 You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus.

32 He will be great,
 be called 'Son of the Highest.'
 The Lord God will give him
 the throne of his father David;
33 He will rule Jacob's house forever—
 no end, ever, to his kingdom."

34 Mary said to the angel, "But how? I've never slept with a man."

35 The angel answered,

The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
 the power of the Highest hover over you;
Therefore, the child you bring to birth
 will be called Holy, Son of God.

36 "And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months' pregnant! 37 Nothing, you see, is impossible with God."

38 And Mary said,

Yes, I see it all now:
 I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve.
Let it be with me
 just as you say.

Then the angel left her.

CHOIR RESPONSE – *Angels We Have Heard on High* (v. 1)

Angels We Have Heard on High

Edward Shippen Barnes | James Chadwick

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SCRIPTURE READING – *Matthew 1:18–25* (*The Message Bible*)

18 The birth of Jesus took place like this. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. Before they came to the marriage bed, Joseph discovered she was pregnant. (It was by the Holy Spirit, but he didn't know that.) 19 Joseph, chagrined but noble, determined to take care of things quietly so Mary would not be disgraced.

20 While he was trying to figure a way out, he had a dream. God's angel spoke in the dream: "Joseph, son of David, don't hesitate to get married. Mary's pregnancy is Spirit-conceived. God's Holy Spirit has made her pregnant. 21 She will bring a son to birth, and when she does, you, Joseph, will name him Jesus—'God saves'—because he will save his people from their sins." 22 This would bring the prophet's embryonic sermon to full term:

23 Watch for this—a virgin will get pregnant and bear a son;
They will name him Emmanuel (Hebrew for "God is
with us").

24 Then Joseph woke up. He did exactly what God's angel commanded in the dream: He married Mary. 25 But he did not consummate the marriage until she had the baby. He named the baby Jesus.

MESSAGE

The Birth

HYMN NO. 217 – *Away in a Manger* (v. 1)

1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

Away in a Manger

James Ramsey Murray

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SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 2:8-20 (*The Message Bible*)

8 There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. 9 Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. 10 The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: 11 A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. 12 This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

13 At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises:

14 Glory to God in the heavenly heights,
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

15 As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." 16 They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. 17 Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. 18 All who heard the shepherders were impressed.

19 Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. 20 The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!

CHOIR RESPONSE

Tiny Little Baby is Born

Jay Althouse

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SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 2:1-11 (*The Message Bible*)

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory—this was during Herod's kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. 2 They asked around, "Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth. We're on pilgrimage to worship him."

3 When word of their inquiry got to Herod, he was terrified—and not Herod alone, but most of Jerusalem as well. 4 Herod lost no time. He gathered all the high priests and religion scholars in the city together and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?"

5 They told him, "Bethlehem, Judah territory. The prophet Micah wrote it plainly:

6 It's you, Bethlehem, in Judah's land,
no longer bringing up the rear.
From you will come the leader
who will shepherd-rule my people, my Israel."

7 Herod then arranged a secret meeting with the scholars from the East. Pretending to be as devout as they were, he got them to tell him exactly when the birth-announcement star appeared. 8 Then he told them the prophecy about Bethlehem, and said, "Go find this child. Leave no stone unturned. As soon as you find him, send word and I'll join you at once in your worship."

9 Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. 10 They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time!

11 They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh.

OFFERING

For those who are called and able, gifts and tithes can still be made through [online giving](#), by mailing them in, and by dropping them off to the church office through the secure mail slot to the left of the double door entry to the church hallway.

OFFERTORY MUSIC - Josh

O Holy Night

Adolphe Adam | Placide Cappeau
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CHRISTMAS DOXOLOGY

Glory be to God the Father, glory be to Christ the Son,
Glory to the Holy Spirit, glory to the Three-in-One.

Here we offer to you gladly all the gifts that you impart,
as we glory in your Presence, giving from a grateful heart.

Christmas Doxology (W Zlobie Lezy)

Brenda J Heard | Edith Margaret Gellibrand Reed
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PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Radiant God of holy interruptions, in the stillness of night and the chaos of our days, you slip into our world with glory wrapped in swaddling cloth. Like the shepherds, we come breathless, humbled, and hoping—to offer what we have. Receive these gifts as signs of our gratitude and trust. May they help announce your peace on earth, not with trumpets and headlines, but with justice, compassion, and shared burdens. Let the offering we place here be the beginning of the offering we make with our lives in response to the child who changes everything. In Jesus' name, Emmanuel, we pray. Amen.

(Luke 2:1-14, (15-20))

The Massacre and Refuge

HYMN NO. 230 - *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (v. 1)

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.

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Lewis Henry Redner | Phillips Brooks
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SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 2:12-21 (*The Message Bible*)

12 In a dream, they were warned not to report back to Herod. So they worked out another route, left the territory without being seen, and returned to their own country.

13 After the scholars were gone, God's angel showed up again in Joseph's dream and commanded, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay until further notice. Herod is on the hunt for this child, and wants to kill him."

14 Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother under cover of darkness. They were out of town and well on their way by daylight. 15 They lived in Egypt until Herod's death. This Egyptian exile fulfilled what Hosea had preached: "I called my son out of Egypt."

16 Herod, when he realized that the scholars had tricked him, flew into a rage. He commanded the murder of every little boy two years old and under who lived in Bethlehem and its surrounding hills. (He determined that age from information he'd gotten from the scholars.) 17 That's when Jeremiah's sermon was fulfilled:

18 A sound was heard in Ramah,
 weeping and much lament.
 Rachel weeping for her children,
 Rachel refusing all solace,
Her children gone,
 dead and buried.

19 Later, when Herod died, God's angel appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt: 20 "Up, take the child and his mother and return to Israel. All those out to murder the child are dead."

21 Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother, and reentered Israel.

MESSAGE

The Christ

SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 1:68-75 (*The Message Bible*)

68 Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
 he came and set his people free.
69 He set the power of salvation in the center of our lives,
 and in the very house of David his servant,
70 Just as he promised long ago
 through the preaching of his holy prophets:
71 Deliverance from our enemies
 and every hateful hand;
72 Mercy to our fathers,
 as he remembers to do what he said he'd do,
73 What he swore to our father Abraham—
74 a clean rescue from the enemy camp,
 So we can worship him without a care in the world,
75 made holy before him as long as we live.

PRAISE RESPONSE

Rejoice! Christ Is Born!

Larry Shackley

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SCRIPTURE READING - John 3:16-17 (*The Message Bible*)

16 “This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. 17 God didn’t go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.

HYMN NO. 246 - *Joy to the World* (v. 1, 2, 4)

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.

2. Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ;
while fields and floods,
rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

4. 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.

Joy to the World

George Frideric Handel | Isaac Watts

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Hallelujah Chorus

from *Messiah*

George F. Handel

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BENEDICTION

HYMN 239 - *Silent Night*

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, the 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!

Silent Night (Stille Nacht)

Franz Xaver Gruber | John Freeman Young | Joseph Mohr

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