

Bethesda Episcopal Church

Christmas Eve 2025

10pm Procession & Sung Eucharist

Please switch off your cell phone before the service begins.

*Before the liturgy, the **Lark Strings** play:*

Concerto Grosso in G Minor, Op. 6, No. 8 "Christmas Concerto"

Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713)

- I. Vivace
- II. Allegro
- III. Adagio-Allegro-Adagio
- IV. Vivace
- V. Allegro
- VI. Largo, Pastorale ad Libitum

Allegro, from Sinfonia in G Major

Thomaso Albinoni (1671-1751)

*Michael Emery, violinist
Jessica Belflower, violinist
Stephani Emery, violist
André O'Neil, cellist*

All stand when the sacristy bells ring.

At the Procession:

Choir Only: Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her baby
In a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.

All: **He came down to earth from heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Savior holy.**

**For he is our childhood's pattern
Day by day like us he grew;
He was little, weak and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us he knew.
And feeleth for our sadness
And he shareth in our gladness.**

**Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see Him; but in heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
When like stars His children crowned
All in white shall wait around.**

All turn to face the crib for the blessing. Remain standing.

The Blessing of the Crib

In the faith of Christ and in thy Name, O God most holy,
Do we bless and hallow this Crib of Christmas;
To set before the eyes of thy children
The great love and humility of Jesus Christ thine only Son;
Who for us and for our salvation came down as at this time from heaven,
And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary his Mother,
And was made man;
To whom with thee and the same Spirit
Be all honor, majesty, glory and worship,
Now, and world without end. **Amen.**

The Celebrant censes the crib, and then says,

May the grace of Christ our Savior be with us all. **Amen.**

The Procession moves to the chancel.

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

**God of God, Light of Light
Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God, begotten, not created.
O come, let us adore him...**

**See, how the shepherds,
Summoned to his cradle,
Leaving their flocks draw nigh with lowly fear;
We too will thither, bend our joyful footsteps.
O come, let us adore him...**

**Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
Glory to God in the highest.
O come, let us adore him...**

**Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!
O come, let us adore him...**

At the altar, the Celebrant sings the Collect of Christmas.

The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.

Let us pray. O God, who hast caused this holy night to shine with the illumination of the true Light: Grant us, we beseech thee, that as we have known the mystery of that Light upon earth, so may we also perfectly enjoy him in heaven; where with thee and the Holy Spirit he liveth and reigneth, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

All sit.

The Reading

Isaiah 9:2-7

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. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. 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. His authority shall grow continually, 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.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

All stand.

Carol

**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 morning stars together, proclaim thy holy birth.
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.
For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep the angels keep their watch of wondering love.**

**How silently, how silently the wondrous Gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear his coming; but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.**

**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.**

Remain standing.

The Holy Gospel

Luke 2.1-20

**The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St Luke.
Glory be to Thee, O Lord.**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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.

In that region, there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

The Sermon

Fr Wallace

After the sermon, all remain seated.

Choir: 'How Shall I Fitly Greet Thee'

Johann Crüger (1598-1662)

How shall I fitly greet Thee? How welcome Thee aright?
The nations long have sought Thee, my hope and heart's delight!
But naught, dear Lord, could move Thee to leave thy heavenly home,
Save love for me unbounded. Lord, make my heart thy throne.

All stand.

The Nicene Creed

**I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible;
And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of his Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God;
begotten, not made;
being of one substance with the Father;
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation
came down from heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary,
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered and was buried:
and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures,
and ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of the Father;
and he shall come again, with glory,
to judge both the quick and the dead;
whose kingdom shall have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord, and Giver of Life,**

**who proceedeth from the Father and the Son;
who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified;
who spake by the Prophets.
And I believe one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church;
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins;
and I look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

All kneel.

The Prayers of the People

As we celebrate the feast of Christmas, we remember in our prayers the Episcopal Diocese of Albany; our bishop, Jeremiah Williamson, and his family. We also ask God's blessing on those who find this season difficult, especially the sick, lonely, anxious and bereaved; that they may be strengthened by the knowledge of Christ's love and mercy. Let us give glory to God on high, who from his fullness has received grace upon grace, saying, Lord, graciously hear us.

For the holy Church of God throughout the world, that with one heart we may rejoice in the Word made flesh. Lord, hear us: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

For goodwill in the hearts of all; and on earth, peace. Lord, hear us: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

For the poor, the outcast and the homeless; for the sick, the lonely and the unloved. Lord, hear us: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

For all who have gone before us, whose hope was in the Word made flesh. Lord, hear us: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

With the blessed Virgin Mary, and all the host of heaven, let our voices rise to praise God's glory. Lord, hear us: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Celebrant: Grant us, O God, such love and wonder, that with humble shepherds, wise men and pilgrims unknown, we may come and adore the Christ-child, our heavenly King, with our gifts of worship and service; through the same, Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Remain kneeling.

The Confession and Absolution

Let us humbly confess our sins to Almighty God.

**Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against thee
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.**

**We have not loved thee with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in thy will,
and walk in thy ways,
to the glory of thy Name. Amen.**

The Celebrant says the Absolution.

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

All stand. During the exchange of the Peace, you may greet those around you in the name of the Lord.

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And with thy spirit.**

During the Carol, a collection is taken to support the ministry of Bethesda Church.

Carol At the Offertory

**God rest ye merry gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay.
For Jesus Christ our Savior
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
When we were gone astray:
*O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.***

**From God our heav'nly Father
A blessed Angel came;
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same,
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name.
*O tidings of comfort and joy...***

**The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway
The blessed babe to find.
*O tidings of comfort and joy...***

But when to Bethlehem they came,

**Where at this infant lay,
They found him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay;
His mother Mary kneeling,
Unto the Lord did pray:
*O tidings of comfort and joy...***

**Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood,
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
Doth bring redeeming grace.
*O tidings of comfort and joy...***

Remain standing.

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up unto the Lord.
Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.
It is meet and right so to do.

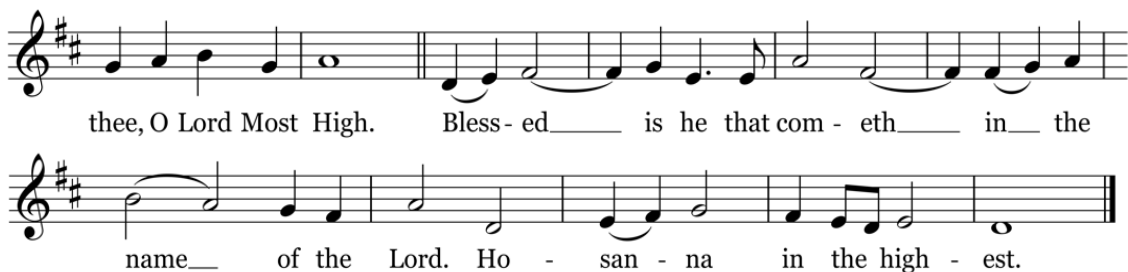
The Celebrant sings the Preface.

It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God. Because thou didst give Jesus Christ, thine only Son, to be born for us; who, by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, was made very Man of the substance of the Virgin Mary his mother; that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin, and receive power to become thy children. Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious Name; evermore praising thee, and saying,

Sanctus and Benedictus Qui Venit *Sung by all, standing.*

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - - - ly, Lord God of Hosts:

Hea-ven and earth are full of thy glo - ry. Glo - ry be to



All kneel.

All glory be to thee, O Lord our God, for that thou didst create heaven and earth, and didst make us in thine own image; and, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to take our nature upon him, and to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption. He made there a full and perfect sacrifice for the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice, until his coming again.

For in the night in which he was betrayed, he took bread; and when he had given thanks to thee, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Likewise, after supper, he took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink this, all of you; for this is my Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins. Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me."

Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy people do celebrate and make, with these thy holy gifts which we now offer unto thee, the memorial thy Son hath commanded us to make; having in remembrance his blessed passion and precious death, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; and looking for his coming again with power and great glory. And we most humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to hear us, and, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, to bless and sanctify these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be unto us the Body and Blood of thy dearly-beloved Son Jesus Christ. And we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, whereby we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies.

Grant, we beseech thee, that all who partake of this Holy Communion may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, and be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction; and also that we and all thy whole Church may be made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost all honor and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

And now, as our Savior Christ hath taught us, we are bold to say,

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

Agnus Dei from Missa ad Praesepe (Mass at the Crib)

George Malcolm (1917-1997)

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

*O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace.*

Communion is received at the altar rail. Please move at the direction of the ushers.

During Communion, the Choir sings

John Rutter (b. 1945)

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love Divine,
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and Angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love Incarnate, Love Divine,
Worship we our Jesus,
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,
Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.

Text: Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

John Rutter (b. 1945)

What sweeter music can we bring,
Than a carol, for to sing
The birth of this our heavenly King?
Awake the voice! Awake the string!
Dark and dull night, fly hence away,
And give the honor to this day,
That sees December turned to May.

Why does the chilling Winter's morn
Smile, like a field beset with corn?
Or smell, like to a meadow new-shorn
Thus, on the sudden? Come and see
The cause, why things thus fragrant be:
'Tis He is born, whose quickening birth
Gives life and luster, public mirth,
To heaven, and the under-earth.

We see Him come, and know Him ours,
Who, with His sunshine, and His showers,
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.
The darling of the world is come,
And fit it is, we find a room
To welcome Him. The nobler part
Of all the house here, is the heart,
Which we will give Him; and bequeath
This holly, and this ivy wreath,
To do Him honor; who's our King,
And Lord of all this reveling.

Text: Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

After Communion, all kneel. Remain kneeling for 'Silent Night' and the Blessing.

Prayer After Communion *Said by the Celebrant*

Almighty God, who by the incarnation of thy only-begotten Son has banished the darkness of this world, and by his glorious birth, enlightens this most holy night: Drive far from us, the darkness of sin, and illuminate our hearts with the glory of thy redeeming grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**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.**

**Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing alleluia;
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.**

The Blessing and Dismissal

May Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with his joy and peace this Christmas and all the days of your life; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Alleluia. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia.

All stand.

Carol

**Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the new-born king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled."
Joyful all ye nations rise; join the triumph of the skies;
With angelic host proclaim "Christ is born in Bethlehem."
*Hark! The herald angels sing, Glory to the new-born king!"***

**Christ by highest heaven adored; Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come, offspring of a Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see. Hail th'incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel
*Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the newborn King!"***

**Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings;
Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die.
Born to raise the sons of earth; born to give them second birth.
*Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the new-born king!"***

Organ

Fanfare on 'Antioch'

Gerre Hancock (1934-2012)

A warm **welcome** and a very **Merry Christmas** to all. If you wish to learn more about this parish community, please contact Fr Wallace or the office: office@bethesdachurch.org

Year-End Gifts to Bethesda Please remember Bethesda in your Christmas and end-of-year giving plans. Our ministry and parish operations depend on your faithful support. Tax receipts are issued for gifts received (or postmarked) no later than December 31st to Bethesda Church Office, c/o 178 Elm Street, Saratoga Springs, 12866.

Upcoming Services

**Christmas Day
Sunday 28 December
Sunday 4 January 2026**

9am Holy Communion (said)
9am Holy Communion (said)
8am (said) & 10am (sung) Eucharist