

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24, 2023



Sunday, December 24, 2023
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Tolling of the Bells

Prelude

Infant Holy

Polish Carol

Call to Worship

Luke 1:26-35

*Opening Hymn

What Child Is This?

Welcome and Announcements

Responsive Prayer of Invocation

One: We share the story of your steadfast love, O God;
with our lives we proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

**All: We declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.**

One: You said, "I have made a covenant with my people,
I have sworn to my servant David."

**All: The heavens praise your wonders, O God,
for who in the skies can be compared to you?**

One: The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours;
the world and all that is in it – you have founded them.

**All: The north and the south – you created them;
righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne
and steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.**

One: Joyful are the people who know your way,
who travel by the light of your word.

**All: For you are the glory of our strength;
by your favor our house is blessed;
by your love our lives are secure. Amen.**

(Psalm 89)

Lighting the Advent Candle of Peace

**God, light the way. We scramble and hurry things along. Remind us to be still
and inhale deeply... (pause) ...Restrain our frenzied spirits. Slow us down to
linger longer here at the threshold of your arrival. In the fullness of time, may
the light of your love shine clearly before us.**

* As the Spirit guides you, we encourage you to rise in body or spirit.

Sung Response *He Came Down*

Passing of the Peace

One: "The Peace of Christ be with you."

All: And also with you!

Luke 1:26-38 (The Message)

Blessing

Message

Finding Muchness

Written by Kobi Yamada, Illustrated by Charles Santoso

*Hymn

Creator of the Stars of Night

Invitation to the Offering

Prayers of the People

Song

Wait for the Lord (Taize)

The Lord's Prayer

*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.*

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

*Closing Hymn

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

Benediction

Postlude

Noel Suisse

Dandrieu




Following the Closing Hymn, we encourage the congregation to remain risen, in body or in spirit, to receive the Benediction, which is both blessing and commission.


We do hope you will join us this evening, at 5:00 p.m., for a special Christmas worship service of Lesson & Carols, featuring our Senior & Junior Choirs.

* As the Spirit guides you, we encourage you to rise in body or spirit.


What Child Is This




1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mar-y's lap is sleep-ing?
2 Why lies he in such mean es - tate where ox and ass are feed - ing?
3 So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; come, one and all, to own him.



Whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet while shep - herds watch are keep - ing?
Good Chris - tian, fear; for sin - ners here the si - lent Word is plead - ing.
The King of kings sal - va - tion brings; let lov - ing hearts en - throne him.



This, this is Christ the King, whom shep - herds guard and an - gels sing;
Nails, spear, shall pierce him through; the cross be borne for me, for you.
Raise, raise the song on high. The vir - gin sings her lul - la - by.



haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mar - y!
Hail, hail, the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mar - y!
Joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mar - y!

This Victorian text gains scope and power by having the original second halves of stanzas two and three restored. They give a stark forward glimpse of what lies ahead for this "babe, the son of Mary!" The tune is much older, dating from Tudor England.

He Came Down

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He came down that we may have love; he

came down that we may have love; he came down that we may

have love; hal-le-lu-jah for-ev-er-more.

Leader: Why did he come?

Additional stanzas:

- ... that we may have light
- ... that we may have peace
- ... that we may have joy

Because this traditional Cameroon piece begins with the refrain, it does not initially reveal that it is cast as a call-and-response song. Assigning the answers to the congregation rather than to the leader is a notable affirmation of the corporate wisdom of God's people.

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Creator of the Stars of Night

Latin: anon. 9th century
Tr. John M. Neale, 1818-1866, alt.

CONDITOR ALME L.M.
Sarum Plainsong, Mode IV

1 Cre - a - tor of the stars of night, Thy peo-ple's ev - er - last - ing light,
2 To thee the trav - ail deep was known That made the whole cre - a - tion groan,
3 When the old world drew on toward night, Thou cam - est, not in splen - dor bright
4 At thy great name ex - alt - ed now All knees must bend, all hearts must bow;

O Christ, thou Sav - ior of us all, We pray thee, hear us when we call.
Till thou, Re - deem - er, should - est free Thine own in glo - rious lib - er - ty.
As mon - arch, but the hum - ble child Of Mar - y, blame - less moth - er mild.
And things ce - les - tial thee shall own, And things ter - res - trial, Lord a - lone. A - men.

WAIT FOR THE LORD

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After James 5 and Psalm 26 (27)

Ostinato Response

p
Wait for the Lord, his day is near.

mf
Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart.

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

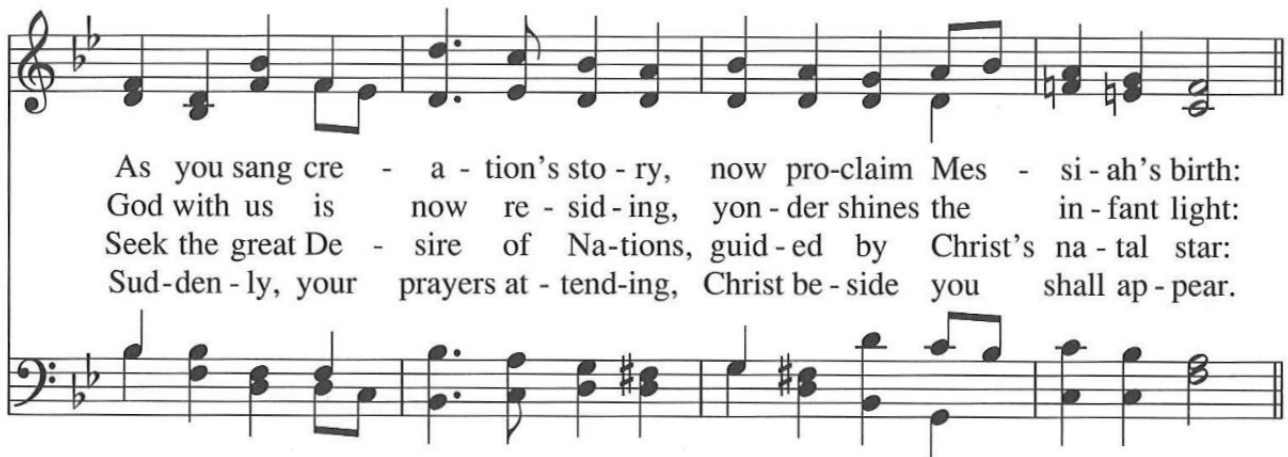
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James Montgomery, 1816; alt.

Luke 2:8-20; Matt. 2:1-2, 9-11

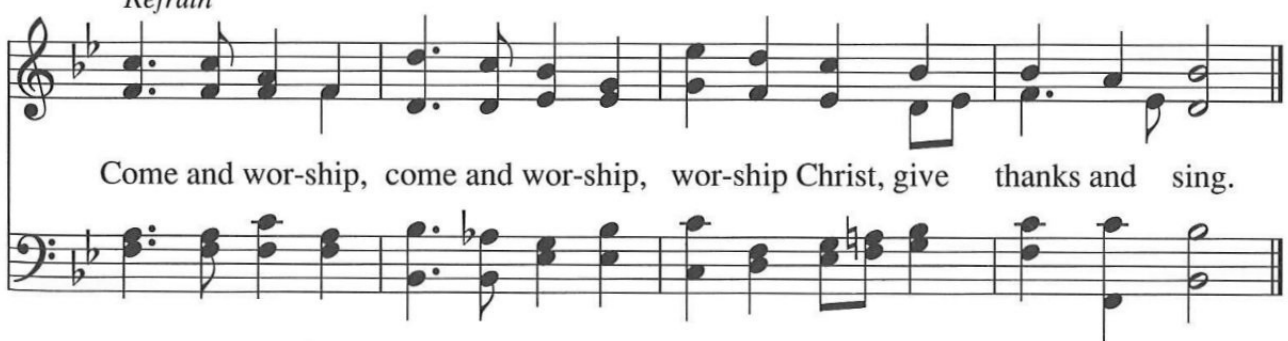


1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
2 Shep-herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, watch-ing o'er your flocks by night,
3 Sag - es, leave your con - tem-pla-tions, bright-er vi - sions beam a - far;
4 Saints, be - fore the al - tar bend-ing, watch-ing long in hope and fear,



As you sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry, now pro-claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
God with us is now re - sid - ing, yon - der shines the in - fant light:
Seek the great De - sire of Na-tions, guid - ed by Christ's na - tal star:
Sud - den - ly, your prayers at - tend-ing, Christ be - side you shall ap - pear.

Refrain



Come and wor-ship, come and wor-ship, wor-ship Christ, give thanks and sing.

James Montgomery, English journalist, raised a strong voice against injustice in his newspaper Sheffield Iris, in which this hymn was first printed on December 24, 1816. The tune is named for Regent Square Church in London, today a congregation of the United Reformed Church in England and Wales.

Tune: REGENT SQUARE 8.7.8.7.8.7.
Henry T. Smart, 1867

Epiphany

Sunday, January 7, 2023, 10:30 am
First Congregational Church of Natick
2 East Central Street, Natick

A shared worship service among four congregations of the United Church of Christ.
Edwards Church in Framingham, The Eliot Church of Natick,
First Congregational Church Natick, The Plymouth Church in Framingham

**AFTER THE THREE MAGI LEFT, BY ANOTHER ROAD, MARY, JOSEPH, AND
JESUS WERE FORCED TO FLEE TO EGYPT.
WHAT CAN OUR FAITH TEACH US ABOUT THE MIGRANT JOURNEY?**

The Rev. Elizabeth Garrigan-Byerly, Executive Minister for Area Conference Ministry, for the Southern New England Conference will preach. After worship, Lucia Panichella, LCSW, will lead a discussion. Lucia is the Senior Director, Programs and Partnership for Jewish Family Services.

A special collection will be taken for Jewish Family Services of Metro West Immigrant & Resettlement Services.



Show up at 9:30 a.m. to join our Pick-up Choir!

Bring a snack to share at Coffee Hour.

Learn how to access worship remotely at www.fcc1651.org/content/worship