



EMMANUEL  
GOD WITH US

Panther Valley Ecumenical Church  
[PantherValleyChurch.org](http://PantherValleyChurch.org)

Our theme for Advent and Christmas this year has focused on the power of music in our lives and in the history of humanity.

Song and singing together has always been a way that communities feel connected and empowered together.

This evening we will fill the night with music as we listen to the story that has changed the world.

We invite you to light your Advent wreath with us and lift high a candle as we sing together Silent Night, Holy Night.



*We wish you a  
Christmas full of hope,  
steeped in joy,  
abounding in peace,  
and  
overflowing with love.*

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

God of grace and truth, we have come to witness a miracle; full of mystery, awe and wonder. We have come to open our hearts; *to receive the Christ child once more.* And in this sacred moment we ask for your Gentle Presence to captivate and challenge us; *As we join with all creation in celebrating Emmanuel; God-With-Us!*

*O Come All Ye Faithful*

## **THE LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE**

Reader One: Because injustice and despair threaten to overwhelm us, we pray for hope...

(Light the first candle in your Advent wreath.)

Reader Two: Because hatred is still so strong, and because people all over the world are suffering, we pray for love.

(Light the second candle in your Advent wreath.)

Reader One: Because grief and loss weigh so heavily, we pray for joy...

(Light the third candle in your Advent wreath.)

Reader Two: Because so many swords have not yet been beaten into ploughshares, we pray for peace...

(Light the fourth candle in your Advent wreath.)

Reader One: God has come to us as a child, to dwell with us, and to walk with us.

(Light the Christ Candle in your Advent wreath, often a candle in the center.)

Reader Two: May the light and the fire from these candles burn away everything that is preventing the God of hope and peace and joy and love from being born among us.

Reader One: Brothers and sisters, be not afraid, even now — even now — the light of Christ is overwhelming the world, on earth as it is in heaven!

## **OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious God, with joy and thanksgiving we gather as your people. We have come to hear again the timeless story of Christ's birth. Quiet our hearts that we may know the peace and fullness of this holy time. Shine, O Light, in the darkness of our world. Sing, O angels, in the stillness of our hearts, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those God favors." This we pray in the name of the Child of Bethlehem. Amen.

### *Christmas Bells*

## **The Prophecy of the Messiah**

### ***Isaiah 9:2,6-7***

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. 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.

### *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*

## **The Coming of Jesus Is Announced to Mary and Joseph**

### ***Luke 1:26-38, Matthew 1:18-24***

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

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.

### *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

## **The Preparations for the Birth of Jesus**

### **Luke 2:1- 5**

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.

### *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

## **Jesus is Born**

### **Luke 2:6-7**

While they [Mary & Joseph] 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.

### *Away In a Manger*

## **Jesus' Birth is Announced to the Shepherds**

**Luke 2:8-14**

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!"

*Angels We Have Heard On High*

## **"The Reign of Christ," An Affirmation of Faith**

The reign of Christ comes not by conquest, domination, and manipulation, but by gracious love, gladly given, and willingly received. The reign of Christ comes near wherever people covenant together and say,

**Christ, we are your body: live in our hearts.**

**Christ, we are your people: govern our lives.**

**Christ, we are your witnesses: send us out in your name!**

*What Child Is This*

## **The Shepherd Find the Baby Jesus**

**Luke 2:15-18**

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; 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

### *Little Drummer Boy*

#### **The Wise Men Bring Their Gifts to Jesus**

##### **Matthew 2:1-6**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

### *O Holy Night*

##### **Matthew 2:7-11**

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

### *We Three Kings*

## **Witness to the Light**

**John 1:1-5**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come 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.

### *Silent Night*

*We invite you to raise your candle high for the Benediction*

## **BENEDICTION**

May the light that enlivens all the world, the light that darkness cannot overcome, love's pure light in Jesus Christ, shine on you and in our world this day.

### *Joy to the World*



*We are grateful for all  
the people who made this  
night bright!*

*Ali Bancroft  
Dan, Sarah, & Preston Ledwith  
Diane Van Dogen  
Jonathan Van Dogen  
Zoe Milelli  
Pastor Ninabeth  
The PV\EC Handbell Choir*