



# PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH

## Christmas Eve

December 24, 2021

*Connecting with the Community,  
Growing Disciples, and Serving Jesus Christ*

*Our Worship can be viewed on our website  
[PantherValleyChurch.org](http://PantherValleyChurch.org)*

## PRELUDE

We invite you to begin your personal preparation at the beginning of the prelude.

## GREETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## GATHERING WORDS

**Love comes to us at Christmas  
Love comes to heal our souls.  
Love brings an invitation  
that our hearts might be made whole.**

**As we gather at the stable  
in the darkness, glad and grateful  
for the sacred in our midst,  
for wonder and delight,  
Christ is born in us this night.**

## THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

Tonight we offer the Lights of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love to illumine the Door of Welcome.

And we add the brightest light of all... the Light of the Newborn Jesus.

It shines bright like the star that rose over Bethlehem.

May this light also shine in our hearts, in our lives, and in our community.

May this light awaken us to possibilities and lead us to greater hospitality.

There IS room in this Inn, a House for the Holy.

## HYMN

*O Come, All Ye Faithful*

Choir & Congregation

Please see the insert.

## THE PEACE LIGHT

The Peace Light made its long journey from the Grotto of the Nativity in the town of Bethlehem, to Tel Aviv, Israel, to Vienna, Austria and finally safely across the Atlantic Ocean to New York City, then to Highlands Presbyterian Church and from there Mary & Penny brought it to our Sanctuary.

This Light, symbolic of the Light of Christ, is meant to promote peace, harmony and unity among all people of the world regardless of race, ethnicity or creed.

***Let us pause and pray for peace.***

## **THE PROPHECY 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... 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 GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD**

Luke 2: 1-7

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.

**SOLO**

*O Holy Night*

Ali Bancroft

## **THE GREATEST STORY CONTINUES**

Luke 2: 8-20

Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.

When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

## **ANTHEM**

*Were You There on That Christmas Night*

## **THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

ONE: The Lord be with you.

**ALL: And also with you.**

ONE: Lift up your hearts.

**ALL: We lift them to God.**

ONE: Now let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**ALL: How good it is to give thanks and praise!**

We gather tonight at the Manger of Grace.

...

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.

...

And so, in remembrance of your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

**Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and juice.

...

Through your Son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

And now as the beloved children of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us:

**THE LORD'S PRAYER** *We invite you to pray the prayer in the language you are used to speaking. Today we are highlighting the prayer in the Traditional text written in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and is used by reformed and Presbyterian churches.*

**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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

## **COMMUNION**

*We will bring the bread and juice to you. We invite you to partake in the meal after everyone has been served.*

Behold the mystery - The Bread we break is the Bread of Life.

Behold the mystery - The Cup we Share is the Cup of Love.

These are the gifts of God for the people of God.

**ALL: Thanks be to God**

## **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.

## **CANDLELIGHT AND SILENT NIGHT**

Christ, the Light of the world, gives each one of us light so that we too may shine with gratitude, hope, and love. Receive the light that comes to you: it comes from the Christ candle, but it reaches you only through your neighbors. Receive the light from a brother or sister in Christ. Hold the light, enjoy the light, and be thankful.

**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.**

**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!"**

**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 Lord, at thy birth!**

**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."**

## **BENEDICTION**

As you go out into the world this night...

May God's Door of Welcome swing open in your heart and in your life.

May Christ's humble first dwelling remind you of the plenty you already know.

And may the Spirit lead you into more possibility and hospitality than you can imagine, making room in The Inn for all.

**ALL: May it be so for you. May it be so for us. May it be so for this church.  
Amen.**

**POSTLUDE**

*Joy To the World*

PVEC Choir

**Please join us in Worship on December 26<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am!  
Wear your pajamas in celebration of all the Pajama's and Books we  
collected for the Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children in  
Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren Counties.**

**Credits:** *This liturgy is adapted from The Worship Design Studio. Used by permission. © [www.worshipdesignstudio.com/theinn](http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com/theinn)*

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*Hope Waits for Us at Advent, Amanda Udis-Kessler, Handbell arr. Stephanie Rhoades, Used by permission. © [www.worshipdesignstudio.com/theinn](http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com/theinn)*

*Hymn: O Come, All Ye Faithful, arranged by Michael Bedford. © 2012 Hall Leonard Corporation. Reproduced by the permission of the Publisher*

*Anthem: "Were You There on That Christmas Night," Natalie Sleeth, CCLI #131679, 1976, 2018 Hope Publishing Company*

### **YOUR CHRISTMAS OFFERING**

*We invite you to express your gratitude to God for all that you have been given by dedicating your time, talents, witness, service, and resources. The gifts you give are helping God build the community of love in this place and in our world.*

*We offer several ways that you can give your fiscal offering: in person by placing your offering in the "church mailbox" in the narthex, dropping it off at the office, by mail, through our website [www.panthervalleychurch.org](http://www.panthervalleychurch.org), or add PVEC to your online bill pay.*

*Thank you for your generosity.*

The Church Office will be closed for the holidays on:

Friday, 12/24 & Monday, 12/27

Friday, 12/31 & Monday, 1/3

***We wish you all a joy filled and restful Christmas and New Year!***

## **PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH**

1490 Route 517 Hackettstown, NJ 07840

~Welcome—we were built for you!~

Panther Valley Ecumenical Church is a multi-denominational church serving northwest New Jersey since 1969. We are formally affiliated with:

The Episcopal Church, The United Church of Christ,  
The Presbyterian Church USA, and The United Methodist Church.

We are a congregation of many Christian traditions who worship together in accordance with Christ's prayer: "that they may all be one."

May God's Blessing go with you this week.

**Pastor:** Ninabeth Metcalf

Email: [pvecpastor@gmail.com](mailto:pvecpastor@gmail.com)

**Music Director:** Diane Van Dongen

**Church Administrator:** Nikki Nicinski

Email: [pvecsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:pvecsecretary@gmail.com)

**Office hours:** Mon. – Fri. 9:00am – 2:00pm

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***FRIENDS ~ FAMILY ~ FAITH***