



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

WITH CAROLS & HOLY COMMUNION

PRELUDE

AS WE GATHER: An old song expresses the yearning well: “I’ll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams.” This time of year (and especially this year), we long to be home, to be surrounded by family, to remember simpler times. Home is more than a place. It’s more than family. It’s a sense of belonging. Today, we celebrate the God who left His home to join us here, so heaven could be our home. We’ll celebrate with many old songs; you’ll recognize some if not all of them, as we praise this Jesus who opened up heaven to be our home. The Lord Himself bless you as He welcomes you home today!

WELCOME

Pastor: Our opening song invites all to come home and worship Jesus, who was born on Christmas morning.

CAROL: “The First Noel”

The first Noel the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter’s night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the east beyond them far;
And to the earth it gave great light,
And....so it continued both day and night.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born in the King of Israel.

PREPARING OUR HEARTS

Pastor: We gather in the name of our loving, saving God, father, Son, and Holy Spirit gathered on this holy night, to reflect on the mystery of birth. The awesome mystery of Christ's birth, the birth of God in the flesh. We pause on this holy eve, to step back from the Christmas rush. We need to keep our focus clear and remember that Christ's birth is the reason for the season. Give us peace and calm in our hearts now, Lord, fill us with Your presence as we mark this Holy Night of Your birth. Let this be for us a special night, A Holy Night different from all others, because it is Your birth-night.

READING:

Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Pastor: It's like we were sitting in darkness. It's like we were living in the land of the shadow of death. In a way, it's like we were in a war we could not win. We were weary, and we just wanted to go home. About 2700 years ago, God spoke through the prophet Isaiah:

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. You have multiplied the nation; You have increased its joy; they rejoice before You as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, You have broken as on the day Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Pastor: Jesus chose to make His home here, on this dusty, dirty earth, in a little town named Bethlehem. He came as an infant lowly.

CAROL: "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"

Infant holy, infant lowly,
For his bed a cattle stall;
Oxen lowing, little knowing
Christ the child is Lord of all.
Swiftly winging, angels singing,
Bells are ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the child is Lord of all!
Christ the child is Lord of all!

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
Vigil till the morning new
Saw the glory, heard the story,
Tidings of a Gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
Praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the child was born for you!
Christ the child was born for you!

READING:

Luke 2:1-7 (infant Jesus)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Pastor: Jesus came for a specific reason. Jesus came to offer us an eternal home to live with God!

CAROL: "Away in a Manger"

Away in a manger, no crib for his 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.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care
And fit us for heaven to live with you there.

READING:Luke 2:8-20

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths 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, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Pastor: God didn't hide what He had done; He told shepherds that He came for them!

CAROL: "Go Tell It on the Mountain"

Go tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and ev'ry-where;
Go tell it on the mountain That Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching O'er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens There shone a holy light.

Go tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and ev'ry-where;
Go tell it on the mountain That Jesus Christ is born!

The shepherds feared and trembled When, lo, above the earth
Rang out the angel chorus That hailed our Savior's birth.

Go tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and ev'ry-where;
Go tell it on the mountain That Jesus Christ is born!

READING:Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Pastor: Because God has done all this for us, we live in joy and triumph!

CAROL: "Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful"

Oh, Come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant!
Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him Born the king of angels:
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!
Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God in the highest:
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Pastor: Lord Jesus, You left Your home in heaven to join us here on this broken earth. You left the warmth of Your Father's embrace to join us in the cold world. You fill us with awe.

Pastor: You came to die for us, to take our guilt, so we can find a home in heaven. Infant King, we confess our sin and rejoice that You've taken it from us. O Jesus, it is good that you have made a home for us in heaven with You.

Pastor: So many don't know what You've done for us. They think their homes are here. Open our mouths to share the wonder of what You did on Christmas. Open our eyes to opportunities and give us wisdom and courage to speak of Your grace.

Pastor: O Jesus, use us for Your glory. Help us look forward to home, and we pray the words You taught us:

ALL: 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 Forever and ever. Amen.

CLOSING CAROL: "Silent Night, Holy Night"

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,
Heav'n-ly 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 your holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

CLOSING AND DISMISEL

POST-SERVICE MUSIC