

Community Presbyterian Church
open hearted, open minded



December 24, 2023
Christmas Eve

Welcome to worship this evening!

Bulletin Cues: **Bold** indicates congregational response, * indicates please stand, if able

Surrogacy

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Luke 2:1-20

Oil paint, charcoal, and copper leaf on canvas



Dr. Christena Cleveland published a book in 2023 called, *God is a Black Woman*. In it, she shares her powerful testimony describing her journey to meet the Black Madonnas carved centuries ago from lava rock. This resonates with my lifelong yearning for Mother God.

Male language for God has always been a wall to my ability to connect in worship. Now, it is a wall that I break through every week—changing words, rewriting liturgy in the moment, saying “Mother” where “Father” is printed, trying “Lady” where “Lord” is printed. In this case, “Yahweh” is actually best. Who are we to squash God into patriarchy so perpetually?

But when someone else joins me in this necessary work, that is when the barrier is removed. I hear it sometimes: “She,” “Mother.” Almost always, the liturgist feels the need to explain themselves. In liturgy discussion, gaslighting is common. “We should be more inclusive.” All of a sudden?

Recently, I was standing at The Dwelling at Richmond Hill. The former slave quarters are open and offered for visitation. After our tour, the idea that one should remove their shoes before entering this holy haven came up. Our tour group was all white people and we discussed this idea from a theoretical standpoint. But earlier, before we entered, I felt it. I was holding a seltzer water can from lunch and felt incredibly rude entering the space with it, so, without understanding, I backtracked and placed my purse and the can outside. I knew not why. After the tour, in our discussion about shoes, our white tour guide mentioned that Black members of the staff felt a great reverence, a holy presence at The Dwelling. The space held the presence of God; it was like entering a sanctuary.

I remember the same feeling when I was young, touring the slave quarters at Monticello. But now, listening to the Richmond Hill staff testimony, I understood these spaces in a new way, with a reverence for the God-like presence of the Black mother in the depths of oppression. “Listen to Black women.” This cry has become a mantra over the last few years. I saw in that moment what Cleveland so eloquently explains in her book. In the pigmentocracy we inhabit, the Black mother is the closest figure to God, and “whitemalegod” is the very farthest. He promotes oppression; She is the savior of the most oppressed. And so I listen.

In this painting, Black Mother God has asked her daughter Mary to hold the role of surrogate for the pregnancy of infant Creator. Mary has carried the child to term. She has given birth. God embraces Mary as well as the Holy Infant in gratitude. For without Mary’s surrogacy, the incarnation could not be. —*Hannah Garrity*

Liturgy and Prayers by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC |
sanctifiedart.org.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

*CALL TO WORSHIP

There is room for you here. If you're weary and worn, or hopeful and patient.

If you're tired and lost, or wrapped up in hope.

If you're new to this place, or have been here before.

Come in, come in. There is room for you here.

The angels are singing,

"Be not afraid."

The angels are singing,

"Good news and great joy!"

So come in, come in!

There is room for us here.

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

How does a weary world practice love?

By sending cards, and picking up the phone.

By practicing empathy, and assuming the best in others. By learning people's stories and finding common ground.

By advocating for justice, and saving a place at the table.

There are a million ways to practice love.

So today we light the candle of love as a reminder and a charge.

With God's help, may we bring love into a weary world. Amen.

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLE LIGHTING

How does a weary world hold onto hope,
practice peace, spread joy, or know love?

How does a weary world combat cruelty?

How does a weary world shine a light into our bleakest night?

We do all these things with God's help.

For tonight, a child is born in Bethlehem.

Tonight, Christ draws near.

Tonight, we light the Christ Candle.

Tonight, we are not alone.

God is near. Love has drawn close.

Rejoice! For God loves this weary world. Amen.

1 Come, thou long - ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;
 2 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child and yet a king,

from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.
 born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king - dom bring.

Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art;
 By thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it rule in all our hearts a - lone;

dear de - sire of ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.
 by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Loving God,

We have heard this story before—
the story of a star in the sky and a baby who was laid in a manger.

We have heard this story before—
passed down in hopeful whispers through the generations.

So this night, as we lean our hearts and our ears closer to you,
we ask that you would make room in our souls to hear this story again.

Make room in us for awe.

Make room in us for wonder.

Make room for heartache and compassion.

Make room in our hearts for you.

Pull us into the narrative,
that we might hear the truths in this ancient Word
as if it were the first time.

For we know that you are still speaking.

So speak to us again this night.

We are listening.

We are already making room.

Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 2: 1-7

Bruce Felger

In those days a decree went out from Caesar 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 in the guest room.



1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for his bed,
 2 The cat - tle are low - ing; the poor ba - by wakes,
 3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask thee to stay



the lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down his sweet head.
 but lit - tle Lord Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes.
 close by me for - ev - er and love me, I pray.



The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
 I love thee, Lord Je - sus; look down from the sky,
 Bless all the dear chil - dren in thy ten - der care,



the lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.
 and stay by my side un - til morn - ing is nigh.
 and fit us for heav - en to live with thee there.

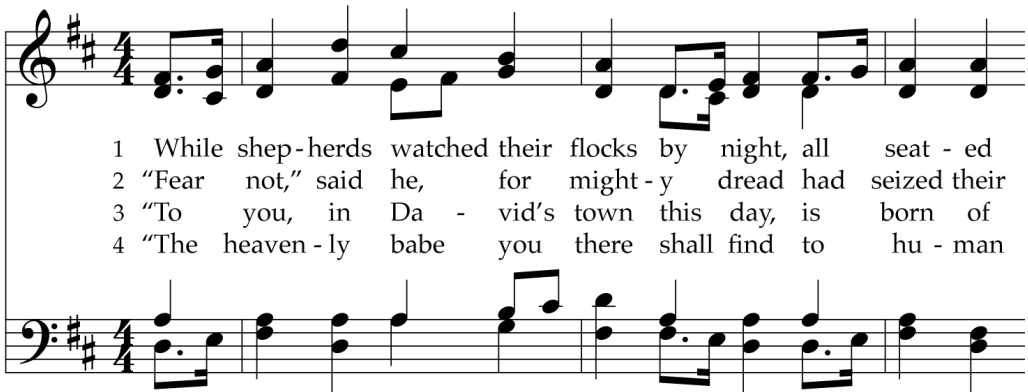
SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 2:8-14

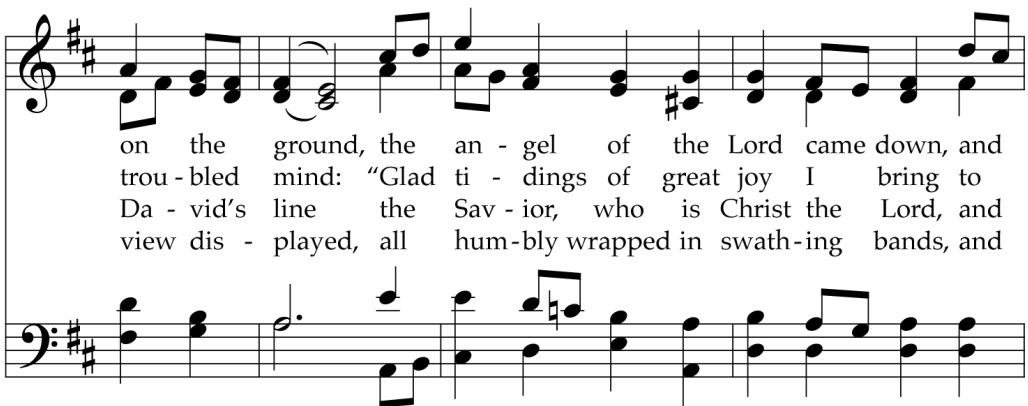
Sue Chipman

Now in that same 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!"



1 While shep-herds watched their flocks by night, all seat - ed
 2 "Fear not," said he, for might - y dread had seized their
 3 "To you, in Da - vid's town this day, is born of
 4 "The heaven - ly babe you there shall find to hu - man



on the ground, the an - gel of the Lord came down, and
 trou - bled mind: "Glad ti - dings of great joy I bring to
 Da - vid's line the Sav - ior, who is Christ the Lord, and
 view dis - played, all hum - bly wrapped in swath - ing bands, and



glo - ry shone a - round, and glo - ry shone a - round.
 you and hu - man - kind, to you and hu - man - kind.
 this shall be the sign, and this shall be the sign:
 in a man - ger laid, and in a man - ger laid."

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 2:15-20

Dave Copeland

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, and 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, just as it had been told them.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Cantique de Noël

Soloist Mark Neville

French, Text: Placide Cappeau, 1843; Music, Adolphe Adam, 1843;

translated, John Dwight, 1855

HOMILY

Pastor Carla

PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father and Mother in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your 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 let us not be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

HYMN GTG 122

Silent Night

As the flame is passed, please tilt your unlit candle into your neighbor's lit one.

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.

3 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.

2 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!"

4 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.

POSTLUDE

Community Presbyterian Church

open hearted, open minded

Sunday, December 24 Christmas Eve
6:00 pm Worship - Onsite and Online

Office Closed this week except for Tuesday morning.

Wednesday, December 27
11:00 am Memorial Service
for Wayne Richardson

Thursday, December 28
5:30 pm Building Usage: Labranza de Dios

Sunday, December 31
9:30 am Worship - Onsite and Online
2:30 pm Building Usage: Labranza de Dios



Judy Leal
Jane and Ed Burgstaler family,
especially daughter Jenny
Connie Holst
Vera Atkinson's daughter, Teresa
Shannon Cisewski
Ron Murray
Dick and Nancy Massaro
Nellie Brovold's mother, Jacqueline
Glenna Muir's sister, Annie
Mary Alice Richardson and family

*To be added to the prayer list,
please contact the office via email:
office@pcrochester.org.*

Emergency Pastoral Support:
Pastor Carla Nelson: 507-254-1254

Church Staff

Bridge Pastor	Rev. Carla Nelson
Pianist	Glenna Muir
Custodian	Nancy Sanford
Office Manager	Stephanie Pasch

Serving in Worship Tonight

Readers	Bruce Felger, Sue Chipman and Dave Copeland
Candle Lighter	Mark Neville
Special Music	Mark Neville
IT Support	Bruce Felger

