

## ST. CYPRIAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ROXBURY

### CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

**REFLECTION:** Merry Christmas! Joy to the world! The Lord has come! The universe is vast, our world is ginormous, and there are plenty of problems to keep us busy. However, on Christmas, we stop and think about the birth of Jesus. We focus our vision on something small, something powerfully tiny, in a small place, in a distant time. This newborn baby has our full attention. When we focus on the birth of Jesus, the rest of the world grows dimmer. The volume of the distractions around us decreases. We smell the warm head of the baby and the oil of frankincense. We see the glow of light around his mother as she holds him. We touch the worn hands of the shepherds as they pray and thank God. We imagine ourselves in this cozy place, full of love, joy, peace, and hope. Is there any better place to be? Why can't the rest of our lives feel like Christmas? The lesson of Christmas is that we can live out love, joy, peace, and hope every day. When the problems of our lives grow too big in our minds, when we are overwhelmed with fears or worries, or when we forget the good news of great joy that has come to all humankind, we can stop and reflect again. Because the Good News is Emmanuel, God with us, we can find ourselves beside Jesus, basking in God's goodness, on any day and at any time.

#### **Hymn for the Procession: *O come, all ye faithful* #83**

Celebrant: Christ is born!

People: **Alleluia!**

Celebrant: Jesus is among us!

People: **Alleluia!**

Celebrant: The Word has become flesh!

People: **Alleluia! Alleluia!**

#### **LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH**

Reader: We light these candles once again in celebration of the light of life, now with us forevermore.

For the Word has become flesh and is dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

People: **Glory to God. Amen!**

(Light the Christmas Candle here)

#### ***Call to Confession***

Even on this day of celebration, let us come before the Holy One of Israel confessing our sins with contrite hearts, so that we may not deceive ourselves, but instead know the truth of our forgiveness.

#### ***Prayer of Confession***

**Almighty God, we confess that our hearts have not been open to all that you have revealed to us in the nativity of your Son. You sent Christ to be born as a helpless Child, and yet we have not attended to suffering of children. You chose humble Mary to be mother of our Lord Jesus, and yet we have not attended to**

**the struggles of women. The holy family could find no room in Bethlehem but a stable, and yet we have not attended to the cry of the homeless. You announced your birth to lowly shepherds, yet we ignore those who tend our farms and fields. Forgive our lack of attention, and free us for joyful compassion, that we may know Christ in serving others. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.**

*Declaration of Forgiveness*

Break forth into singing, for the Lord has redeemed you. See the salvation of God; find comfort in his strong arms.

*Prayer of the Day*

On this day, Gracious Lord, you come to us as Word, as light, as flesh. Teach us to know you so well that our lives may befriend this world you have made, in the name of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

*Prayer for Illumination*

By the light of the Holy Spirit shining in our midst, open our hearts and minds, O God, to your Word, present now and always for the sake of your holy name. Amen.

**Scripture Readings**

*Old Testament: 2 Samuel 7:1-11,16*

*Psalms 89:1-4, 19-26*

*Romans 16:25-27*

*Sequence Hymn: **Hark the herald angels sing #87***

*Gospel Luke 1:26-38*

*Sermon*

*O Holy night (Noble and the choir)*

*The Blessing of the crib*

The priest and people stand facing the crib.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Priest: Let us pray.

God, you have made this holy night to shine with the brightness of the True Light. You have sent your Son Jesus to be our Redeemer and to live in our hearts by the power of your Holy Spirit. We thank and praise you for this most wonderful gift; and we pray that by living in him we may know the joy and peace of his eternal presence, now and forever more. Amen.

Lord, we ask you to bless and hallow this crib, which gives us a picture of the truth of your becoming man. May all who look on it learn the lessons of your humility and love, so that all may be filled with your heavenly light and peace. May our wills be made strong to glorify you by our deeds, so that we may shine as your lights in the world; through him who lives and reigns with you Father, and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

We bless this crib in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

*Prayers of Intercession*

(A time of silence may follow each petition)

Let us pray for the world in which the Prince of Peace took flesh and form, saying,  
**hear us, O God; your mercy is great.**

We give you thanks, Holy One, for the light that has come into the darkness of our world, for the truth illuminated, for the pathway that has opened, for the rejoicing of your people. **Hear us, O God; your mercy is great.**

We give you thanks for the feet of those who bring good news, friendship, comfort, food, shelter, and medicine for healing. **Hear us, O God; your mercy is great.**

We give you thanks for the church of Christ Jesus and for all people of faith whose attention to the way of peace tears down walls that keep us apart.

**Hear us, O God; your mercy is great.**

We give you thanks for this country and for every nation where wisdom reigns, where leaders work for the well-being of the poor, so that no one is hungry or homeless, and every child is valued and nourished. **Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.**

We pray for the knowledge and courage to be good stewards of all that you have given us: ourselves, our neighbors, the strangers among us, the oceans and rivers, the air and soil, creatures large and small, that we may continue to be blessed with health and life.

**Hear us, O God; your mercy is great.**

We pray for those whose flesh is harmed by poverty, sickness, and cruelty of any kind, that the Word made flesh may so fill your world with the power to heal that all people world be made strong and whole. **Hear us, O God; your mercy is great**

We pray for those concerns yet unnamed this day, especially the sick...(a time of silence is kept to allow for responses) **Hear us, O God; your mercy is great.**

We commend all these things to you and offer our thanksgiving trusting that what we have left unsaid, your holy wisdom can unearth; in the name of the One who came among us in the power of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

*Priest:*

Dear God, We trust you are with us in this Christmas, new year and always. When fears grow in us and around us, help us to remember we can hold hope, bring peace, practice joy, and choose love. Amen.

*The Peace*

*Noble: A Christmas dream*

*Announcements*

*Blessings*

*Offertory hymns: Good Christian friends, rejoice #107*

*What child is this #115*

*Prayer of Thanksgiving at the offertory*

On this glad new day for all the earth we are grateful for giving hearts made joyful in the gift of your Son. For you, O God, are generosity itself. Bless these gifts we offer to the benefit of those in need. Bless our lives in service of sharing your love in the world; through Jesus Christ we pray.

**EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER B (p367)**

*Communion Hymns: Away in a manger #101*

*Angels we have heard on high #96*

*Blessing*

Now may the true light shine on you. May the Son sent by God be your guide and strength. May you go in peace and live in hope, in Jesus' name.

*Hymn: **Once in Royal David's City #102***

*Dismissal*

God's Word has come to earth to bring us together in love. Go in peace to love and serve Christ. Alleluia, alleluia!

*Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!*

***Our Interim Rector, Noble, his wife, Valda, the Church Wardens and vestry wish you and your loved ones a Blessed, safe, and Merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.***

***MERRY CHRISTMAS!***