It's Christmas Eve, December 24, 2020, and welcome to First Church. While this is not quite what many of us would have preferred, meaning because of Covid-19 and having to be virtual and not in the Sanctuary, we *are celebrating being together in spirit*… and if our journey of faith has taught us anything, being together in spirit "is a mighty fine place to be!" Thanks for being with us and hope you enjoy the service! -Pastor Matt

FIRST CHURCH in PEMBROKE

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Rev. Dr. Matthew E. Jackson, Pastor

Christmas Eve Service

Prelude *O Holy Night* Karin Foley, soprano

Greeting and Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we gather together with humbled spirits, because of You and Your incredible gift of Your Son, the Christ-child, who would grow to be the world's long-awaited Messiah. May our worship now, and every time we gather, confirm our ever-evolving faith in You, Your Son Jesus Christ, and Your infinite Holy Spirit. Join us, O God, in this hour in celebration… for we are Your people, we are grateful, and pray as always in Your Holy Name. Amen and Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

It is Christmas Eve, a time unlike any other day of the year… a time when people of the world are traditionally reminded of the birth of a child, a child whom many believe and many more will come to believe, is the Christ-child, the One we would come to know as Jesus, and ultimately worship as The Messiah.

Each of the past four weeks, we began our worship services with the lighting of a candle, each candle representing a particular aspect of the Christian faith.

We started with the 1st Sunday's candle – the candle of Hope… (light 1st candle)
We then moved to the 2nd Sunday's candle of Peace… (light 2nd candle)
The third Sunday we began worship by lighting of the candle of Love…(light 3rd candle)
This past Sunday, the 4th Sunday in Advent, we lit the candle of Joy… (light 4th candle)

Tonight, Christmas Eve 2020, we light the Christ Candle, to declare, just as the Scriptures promised, "For unto us a child is born, a Son is given to us. The government will rest upon His shoulders. And He will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government, and Its Peace, will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice… for all eternity." Hallelujah, Hallelujah!

Carol: *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*

The Call to Worship (Hymn 152, New Century Hymnal, *"Born in the Night, Mary's Child"* by Geoffrey Ainger)

P: Born in the night, Mary's Child, a long long way from home. Coming in need, Mary's child, born in a borrowed room.
C: Clear shining light, Mary's Child, Your face lights up our way; Light of the world, Mary's Child, dawn on our shadowed day.
P: Truth of our life, Mary's Child, You tell us God is good; Prove it is true, Mary's Child, go to Your cross of wood.
C: Hope of the world, Mary's Child, You're coming soon to reign; Sovereign of earth, Mary's Child, walk in our streets again.

The Sharing of Holy Communion **We pause for a personal moment of quiet reflection and silent confession**

Hear these words of Assurance… *"But when God our Savior revealed His kindness and love, He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His Mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of His Grace, He made us right in His sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life."*

We will use the "COVID-19 safe Communion cups" provided by the Deacons and made available to all by coming to the church and taking the "sealed unit of bread/cup" from the mailbox as offered previously. Pastor Matt will offer the Bread and the Cup as it would have been done if people were gathered together in the Sanctuary. We will hear the story of the disciples gathering in the Upper Room; the Bread will be offered, a pause to give thanks and then a moment given to share the Bread; then the Cup will be offered, again a pause to give thanks, and then a moment for sharing of the cup. Holy Communion will end with the "We have shared a holy moment and may the Peace of Christ be with you and with us all. Amen."

Musical Moment *O Sleep, Dear Holy Baby*

Christmas Stories:

A) The Real Story… Scriptures Version of the Birth of Jesus…

1) ***Scriptures say "… In the sixth month…"*** [Luke 1: 26-38]

Carol: *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

2) ***Scripture reveals more of the story "…At the time of the Roman Emperor…"*** [Luke 2: 1-7]

Song: *Gesu Bambino*

3) ***Scripture testifies "They hurried to the village…It was just as the angel had said…"*** [Luke 2: 8-20]

Carol: *Angels We Have Heard on High*

B) "A Reflection of Christmas Past…" *An interview with Gail Horsefield*

C) Twas the Night Before Christmas
Version by Clement Clarke Moore and read by Lenny Lapham

D) Live from Boston and Bethlehem…

Written by Rev. Dr. Matthew E. Jackson and presented by ***The Christian Ed team and participants*** *Pat Small, Francine Palmer, and Gail Horsefield.* **Reporter #1** – Adriana Palmer; **Reporter #2** – Bradley Palmer: **Reporter #3** – Cailyn Davis; **Reporter #4** – Briana Palmer. **"The innocence of a child – the children await…"** Cailyn Davis, Connor Davis, Colton Davis, and Camden Davis.

Carol *Silent Night* Alex Hodge, violin

Closing words from Pastor Matt

Closing salutation: "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year" *The Davis Family*

Postlude *"Hark the Herald Angels Sing!"*