



# Valley Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Dear Friend in Christ,

I am pleased to share with you the order of worship for Valley Christian Church's Christmas Eve service, which we will hold on Zoom at 4:00pm on December 24, and which features the traditional Christmas story as narrated by the Gospel of Luke. The worship will begin with a brief carol-sing led by our exemplary pianist, Margaret Cox, before transitioning straight into the order of worship as enclosed. While 2020 changed a lot about how we worship God, I hope that you can find some festiveness and joy in celebrating the birth of God's Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, with us this Christmas Eve!

Please use following phone numbers and links beginning at 3:45pm. You can join in one of two ways:

**By computer, smart phone or tablet:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86757133623?pwd=OTFUQWJvU21MMmR6bkY5SitpelR1UT09>

**By Phone:** 1 (312) 626 6799 ID 867 5713 3623, Passcode 205879

(If you need a live link to the Worship link, you can go to the homepage of our website at [www.vccbhm.org](http://www.vccbhm.org) with the passcode 205879 OR click on "Links to Zoom" then the Sunday Worship link.)

I look forward to seeing you on Christmas Eve.

Christ's and yours,  
Pastor Eric

# Valley Christian Church

## Christmas Eve

4:00 pm, December 24, 2020

### PRELUDE

*"Sweet Little Jesus Boy"*

Margaret Cox  
Pianist

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Lord, grant us your peace according to your word  
People: For my eyes have seen your salvation  
Leader: Which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples  
People: A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel

Eve Harman  
Worship Leader

(Luke 2:29-32, NRSV)

### CAROL OF PRAISE

*"Joy to the World"*

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth receive her king  
Let every heart prepare him room  
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing  
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing*

*Joy to the world the Savior reigns, let all their songs employ  
While fields and flocks, rocks, hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy*

*He rules the world with truth and grace  
And makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness  
And wonders of his love, and wonders of his love  
And wonders, and wonders of his love*

### FIRST SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:1-4

Eve Harman  
Worship Leader

### SECOND SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:1-7

Eve Harman  
Worship Leader

### SPECIAL MUSIC

*"O Holy Night"*

Rev. Jan Watts

### THIRD SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:8-20

Eve Harman  
Worship Leader

### MESSAGE

"A Decree Went Out"  
See insert for message excerpt

Rev. Dr.  
Eric Atcheson

### CAROL

*"Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"*

*Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall  
Oxen lowing, little knowing, Christ the babe is lord of all  
Swiftly winging, angels singing  
Bells are ringing, tidings bringing  
Christ the babe is Lord of all, Christ the babe is Lord of all*

*Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping  
Vigil til 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 babe was born for you  
Christ the babe was born for you*

### CALL TO COMMUNION

May we remember on Christmas Eve the strength Mary and Joseph must have had, and how we find our strength here.

Rev. Dr.  
Eric Atcheson

### COMMUNION CAROL

*"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"*

*Lo, how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung  
Of Jesse's lineage coming by faithful prophets sung  
It came a flow'ret bright, amid the cold of winter  
When half spent was the night*

*Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the rose I have in mind  
With Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind  
To show God's love aright, she bore to us a Savior  
When half spent was the night*

### COMMUNION PRAYER

Conclude by praying together the Lord's Prayer

Elder

**HOLY  
COMMUNION**

Partake of the holy communion (bread, juice, or whatever is available to you)

**WORDS OF  
INSTITUTION**

Hear the words of Jesus when He said, "Take and eat, this is my body, broken for you. Take and drink, this is the cup of the covenant poured out for you."

**CLOSING  
CAROL**

*"Silent Night"*

*(You are invited to illuminate your Christmas tree lights, candles, or other source of light near you at this time.)*

*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*

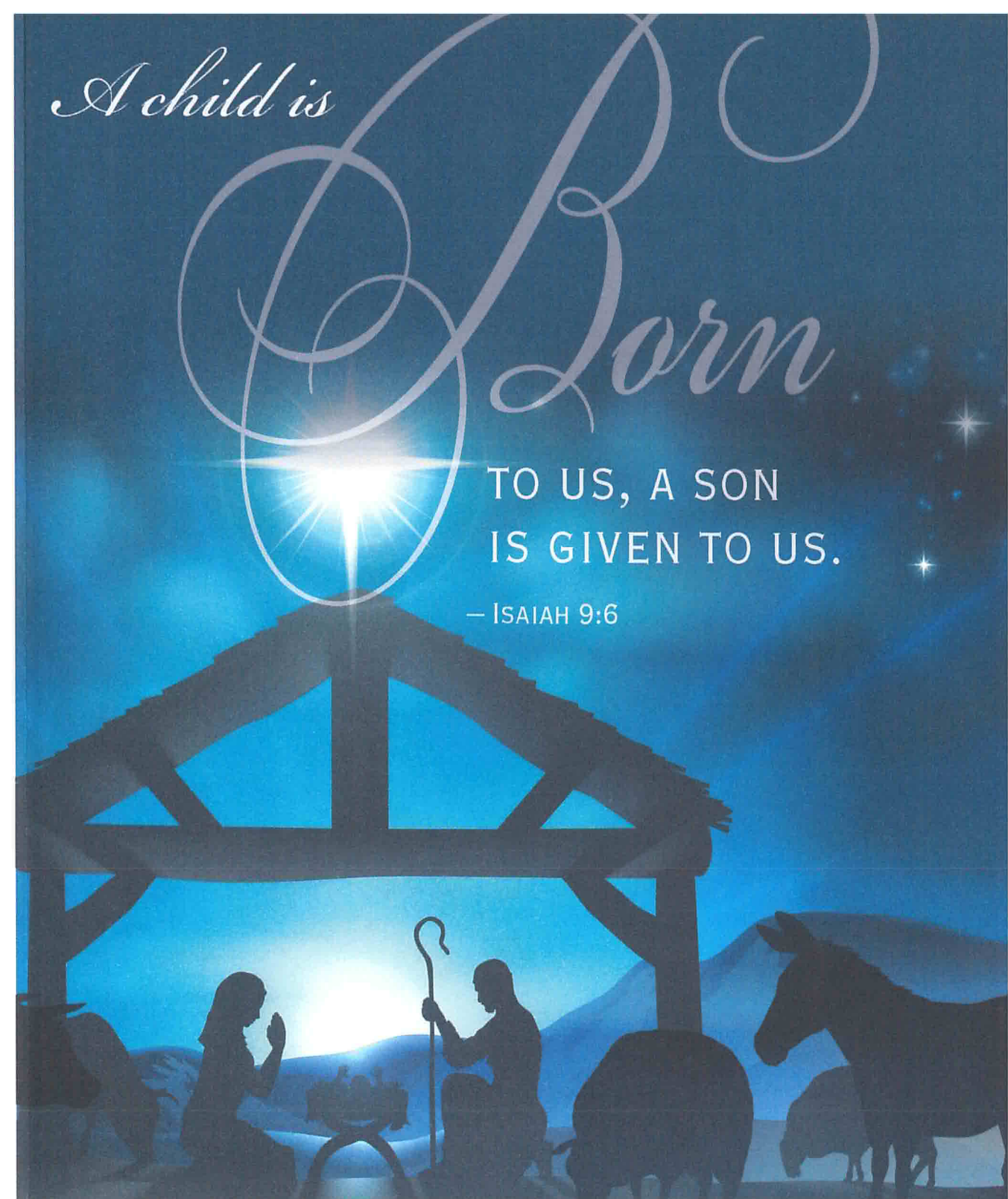
**BENEDICTION**

May the God who has beckoned you to the manger, like the shepherds, like the magi to come, hasten you back out from the city of David to share the good news, that born unto us, this day, is a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, and may the blessing of that Lord be with you today and all days. Amen, and Merry Christmas.

*Rev. Dr.  
Eric Atcheson*

**POSTLUDE**

*You are warmly invited to remain in our Zoom worship space after the postlude in a time of quiet reflection until you feel ready to exit.*



**MEDITATION**  
**Christmas Eve 2020**  
**“A Decree Went Out,” Luke 2:1-20**

I think the nature of 2020 has been such that I think Christmas can serve for us a profound reminder of God’s power and sovereignty, even in the face of truly terrible loss. And 2020 has caused each of us to lose something—even if only a sense of normalcy. Which, in that regard at least, gives us something in common with the Holy Couple.

For, as Luke writes, a decree went out then as well, by Caesar Augustus, for the population of the Roman Empire to be counted in a census. This was not a benevolent, good-government gesture by Augustus, mind you, like the once-a-decade census we hold today. The primary interest of the Roman Empire in a census would be to determine just how many people were attached to the blocks of land that would get allocated to the empire’s tax collectors—which is why Mary and Joseph must journey to Bethlehem, even though Luke places their present home in Nazareth. Because Bethlehem is Joseph’s ancestral home, that is the land he is tied to for tax purposes, and it is there where he and his family must be counted for the census.

This was a real hardship for the Holy Couple. Travel in those days was dangerous enough to begin with, as evinced by the premise of the parable of the Good Samaritan, but Mary was also nine months pregnant, and Nazareth and Bethlehem are on completely opposite sides of Israel to boot, with Nazareth in the Galilean north and Bethlehem in the Judean south.

But they make the journey anyways, because a decree went out and they must comply with it. But at the heart of the Christmas story is that while Caesar sent his own decree out, God was busy sending out a decree as well in the form of this baby boy born to us. A decree written not with ink and paper, but with flesh and blood. A decree that did not treat the rest of humanity as numbers on a page, but as souls with value and fundamental worth.

Caesar sent out a decree that we must be counted for his own purposes, but God sent out a decree that we count simply because we are loved.

And whatever else 2020 may have taken from you, or changed about you, know this: it cannot, and must not, take from you that basic and foundational truth: that God so loved the world—including you!—that God sent God’s only Son, that we might not perish forever but one day have eternal life.

**Angels We Have Heard on High**

Angels we have heard on high  
 Sweetly singing o'er the plains  
 And the mountains in reply  
 Echoing their joyous strains  
 Gloria, in excelsis Deo!  
 Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Come to Bethlehem and see  
 Christ who comes in lowly birth;  
 Come, adore on bended knee,  
 Jesus, joy of heaven and earth  
 Gloria, in excelsis Deo!  
 Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

**Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**

Hark the herald angels sing  
 "Glory to the newborn King!  
 Peace on earth and mercy mild  
 God and sinners reconciled"  
 Joyful, all ye nations rise  
 Join the triumph of the skies  
 With the angelic host proclaim:  
 "Christ is born in Bethlehem"  
 Hark! The herald angels sing  
 "Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heav'n born prince of peace!  
 Hail the Son of righteousness!  
 Light and life to all He brings  
 Ris'n with healing in His wings  
 Mild He lays His glory by  
 Born that man no more may die

Born to raise us from the earth  
 Born to give us second birth  
 Hark! The herald angels sing  
 "Glory to the newborn King!"

**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  
 Looking down where he lay  
 The little Lord Jesus  
 Asleep on the hay

Be near me, Lord Jesus  
 I ask Thee to stay  
 Close by me for ever  
 And love me, I pray  
 Bless all the dear children  
 In Thy tender care  
 And fit us to Heaven  
 To live with Thee there

**Go Tell It on the Mountain**

Go tell it on the mountain  
 Over the hills and everywhere  
 Go tell it on the mountain  
 That Jesus Christ is born

While shepherds kept their watching  
 O'er silent flocks by night (over)

Behold throughout the heavens  
 There shone a holy light

Go tell it on the mountain  
 Over the hills and everywhere  
 Go tell it on the mountain  
 That Jesus Christ is born

Down in a lowly manger  
 The humble Christ was born  
 And God sent our salvation  
 That blessed Christmas morn

Go tell it on the mountain  
 Over the hills and everywhere  
 Go tell it on the mountain  
 That Jesus Christ is born

Go tell it on the mountain  
 Over the hills and everywhere  
 Go tell it on the mountain  
 That Jesus Christ is born

**The First Noel**

The first Noel, the angels 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 is the King of Israel.

**O Come, All Ye Faithful**

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and  
 triumphant  
 O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem  
 O come and behold Him, born the  
 King of Angels  
 O come, let us adore Him  
 O come, let us adore Him  
 O come, let us adore Him  
 Christ the Lord

O sing, choirs of angels, sing in  
 exultation  
 O come, O come ye to Bethlehem  
 O come and behold Him, born the  
 King of Angels  
 O come, let us adore Him  
 O come, let us adore Him  
 O come, let us adore Him  
 Christ the Lord