

“The Work of Christmas” – Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.

This litany was composed by Howard Thurman (1899-1981),
the African-American theologian, educator, and civil rights leader, from his book,
The Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations.



We invite you to give via our church website www.fpcw.org (see QR code), our smartphone app, or by sending a check to the church office. An offering plate will be passed during the worship service. We are grateful for your generosity!

WORSHIP LEADERS

Rev. Jeff Lehn, Preaching
Rev. Laura Sherwood, Pastoral Liturgist
Carol Moss, Vocalist
Linnea Jacobs, Flute and Vocalist

fpcw CHURCH STAFF

Rev. Jeffrey Lehn, Senior Pastor/Head of Staff
Rev. Laura Sherwood, Interim Associate Pastor
Rev. Dr. Lolly Dominski, Parish Assoc. for Congregational Care
Peggy Massello, Director of Worship and Music
Scott McElhenie, Director of Student Ministries
Lindley Traynor, Director of Children’s Ministry
Madeline Weston, Communications and Office Coordinator
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First Presbyterian Church of Wilmette
Christmas Eve
December 24th, 2022
4:00 pm Candlelight Service

Welcome to the First Presbyterian Church of Wilmette! We are glad you are here for this service of celebration and candlelight. If you need assistance, please ask an usher. For families with young children, this service may also be experienced in the Lounge. Merry Christmas! You are loved and never alone.

*please stand as you are able.

PRELUDE - *Carols for Flute and Organ*

Various arrangers

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Over a hundred people, from the ages of two to eighty years old, were asked to fill in the blank for the statement: "My story is. . ." From the voices of different generations, hear their answers:

*Amazing!.. Just beginning... A wee bit messy, with lots of love... Privileged... Hopeful.
Full of silliness... Still unfolding... Long, but good... One of resilience.
Incomplete, thank goodness... Multilingual... A work in progress.
My story is not just mine, it's tied to yours.*

Tonight we tell the story that we tell every year - the story of Christ's birth, the story of love made flesh. It's a story that weaves through every generation. It's a story that picks up the bits and pieces of our narrative and braids us together. So tonight we light the Christ candle, because from generation to generation, our story belongs to God. Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN NO. 133** - *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

ADESTE FIDELES

CALL TO CONFESSION

As a kid I used to think the prayer of confession was scary. I thought it was a moment designed to make me feel guilty, intended for eyes cast down and shoulders hung low. But that's not it at all. The prayer of confession is an invitation. It's an opportunity to say, "This is who I've been, and this is who I long to be." So let us pray together. Let us be truth tellers. Let us hold our heads high and speak honestly before God and one another. This is easy to do when we are surrounded by a God who delights in us. Friends, let us pray:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy God, we admit - we don't fully understand the Christmas story. We are not familiar with angel choruses. We have not walked many miles to be counted in a census, and we don't always hear your voice in our dreams. We don't fully understand this story, so we admit, sometimes we hesitate to tell it. Instead of running out into the streets to shout that there is a love bigger than we could imagine, we whisper this good news. Instead of throwing open the doors and inviting people in, we simply leave them unlocked, hoping folks will figure it out. Instead of telling the next generation why this

night matters so much, we stay quiet, afraid of creating pressure. Forgive us for our silence. Forgive us for our hesitation. Forgive us for the moments when we fail to share your good news. Plant this story of love so deep in our bones that we cannot help but share it from generation to generation. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Friends, no matter where we go, no matter what we say, no matter what we do, we belong to God. We are held. We are loved. We are forgiven. Do not be afraid. There is good news of great joy for all people this night! **Thanks be to God! Amen.**

RE-TELLING THE CHRISTMAS STORY

HYMN NO. 115 - *Away in a Manger*

MUELLER

(Congregation sing verses 1 & 3, soloists will sing verse 2)

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 2:1-7 (pg. 58 in the New Testament)

HOMILY

Rev. Jeff Lehn

TRIO - *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

German Carol

PRAYERS FOR CHRISTMAS EVE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen

CALL FOR OFFERING

OFFERTORY - *Gesù Bambino (The Infant Jesus)*

Pietro A. Yon

CANDLE LIGHTING AND SHARING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

The light from the Christ candle will be passed to each person. Light candles in silence; tip unlit candle to the lighted candles. Parents, please assist and guide your children.

CAROL MEDLEY (see insert)

BENEDICTION

*Please extinguish candles before leaving the sanctuary. Thank you for worshipping with us.
The pastors, staff, officers, and members of fpcw wish you a very Merry Christmas!*

POSTLUDE — *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

arr. Michael Burkhart