

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Holy Eucharist, Rite II

December 24, 2024 - 10:45 p.m.



HOLY COMFORTER EPISCOPAL CHURCH
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA



WELCOME TO HOLY COMFORTER!

The people of Holy Comforter joyfully welcome you to this historic church. We are happy that you are here, and we hope you will find your worship today meaningful and inspiring.

If you are looking for a church to call your own, we hope you will consider our parish. At the root of all we do is our desire to live out the Great Commandment of Jesus Christ: to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Holy Comforter has made a difference in our lives, and we believe it can do the same for you.

-The Rev. Gregory B.F. Brown, Rector

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

PRELUDE

The Holy Comforter Choir of Adults
Jane Arant, *Conductor and Organist*
Tadd A. Hoffman, *Trumpeter*
Amy Orsinger, *Flautist*
Tia Wilson, Ashley Reynolds, Emily Doehling, Emily Mehigan, *Soloists*

MUSIC TO CELEBRATE CHRIST'S NATIVITY

Hear, King of Angels

(from *Christmas Oratorio*, J.S. Bach, 1685-1750)

Unto us a boy is born

(melody from *Piae Cantiones*, 1582, text at Hymn 98)

Cradle Song

(Welsh lullaby, setting by Gerald Near, b. 1942)

Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber, Holy angels guard by bed!
Heavenly blessings without number Gently falling on thy head.
Sleep, my babe, thy food and raiment House and home, thy friends provide,
All without thy care and payment, All thy wants are well supplied.

Soft and easy is thy cradle, Coarse and hard thy Savior lay,
When his birthplace was a stable And his softest bed was hay.
See the kindly shepherds round Him telling wonders from the sky!
When they sought Him, there they found Him, With His Virgin Mother by.

Mayst thou live to love and fear Him, Trust and love Him all thy days;
Then go dwell forever near Him, see His face and sing His praise.
Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber, Holy angels guard thy bed;
Heavenly blessings without number Gently falling on thy head.

He shall feed his flock/Come unto him

(from *Messiah*, George Frideric Handel, 1685-1759)

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, and gently lead those that are with young.
Come unto him, all ye that labor, . . . ye that are heavy laden; and he will give you rest.
Take his yoke upon you and learn of him, for he is meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Pastorale

(J.S. Bach)

The Apple Tree

(setting by David Ashley White, b. 1944)

The tree of life my soul hath seen, laden with fruit and always green:
The trees of nature fruitless be compared with Christ, the apple tree.

His beauty doth all things excel, by faith I know, but ne'er can tell
The glory which I now can see in Jesus Christ, the apple tree.

For happiness I long have sought, and pleasure dearly I have bought;
I missed of all but now can see 'tis found in Christ, the apple tree.

I'm weary with my former toil, here I will sit and rest a-while;
Under the shadow I will be of Jesus Christ, the apple tree.

His fruit doth make my soul to thrive, it keeps my dying faith alive,
Which makes my soul in hast to be with Jesus Christ, the apple tree.

Mary had a baby

(Spiritual, arranged by William L. Dawson (1899-1990))

Mary had a baby, My Lord!
Where was he born? Born in a manger. What did they call Him? "King Jesus."
"King Jesus,"
"Mighty Counselor,"
"King Emmanuel,"
"Mighty God,"
"Everlasting Father,"
"Prince of Peace."
Mary had a baby. My Lord!

THE HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE TWO

WELCOME

PROCESSIONAL HYMN (*please stand*)

#102 *Once in royal David's city*
A soloist and the choir will sing verses 1 and 2.
The congregation is invited to sing verses 4, 5, and 6 (omit verse 3).

STATION AT THE CHRISTMAS CRECHE

Celebrant The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us:

People **And we beheld his glory.**

Celebrant Let us pray.

O God our Creator, to restore our fallen race you spoke the effectual word, and the Eternal Word became flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Mercifully grant that as he humbled himself to be clothed with our humanity, so we may be found worthy, in him, to be clothed with his divinity; who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

THE WORD OF GOD

OPENING ACCLAMATION AND PRAYER

Celebrant Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People **And blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.**

Celebrant Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthy magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

HYMN OF PRAISE

Gloria in excelsis S278 (Mathias)



1. Glo-ry to God in the high-est, and



peace to his peo - ple on earth. 2. Lord God, heaven - ly King, al -



might - y God and Fa - ther, we wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we



praise you for your glo - ry. 3. Lord Je - sus Christ,



on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God, 4. you



take a - way the sin of the world: have mer - cy on us;



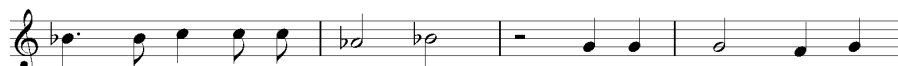
5. you are seat - ed at the right hand of the Fa - ther: re -



ceive our prayer. 6. For



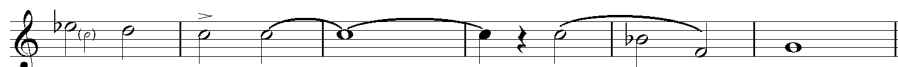
you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord,



7. you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the



Ho - ly Spi - rit, in the glo - ry of



God the Fa - ther. A - men.

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Celebrant Let us pray.

O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen.**

THE FIRST LESSON (*please be seated*)

Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness--
on them light has shined.
You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 96 (*sung by the choir*)

Sing to the Lord a new song; *
sing to the Lord, all the whole earth.
Sing to the Lord and bless his Name; *
proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations *
and his wonders among all peoples.
For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; *
he is more to be feared than all gods.
As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols; *
but it is the Lord who made the heavens.
Oh, the majesty and magnificence of his presence! *
Oh, the power and the splendor of his sanctuary!
Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples; *
ascribe to the Lord honor and power.

Ascribe to the Lord the honor due his Name; *
 bring offerings and come into his courts.
 Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; *
 let the whole earth tremble before him.
 Tell it out among the nations: "The Lord is King! *
 he has made the world so firm that it cannot be moved;
 he will judge the peoples with equity."
 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
 let the sea thunder and all that is in it; *
 let the field be joyful and all that is therein.
 Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy
 before the Lord when he comes, *
 when he comes to judge the earth.
 He will judge the world with righteousness *
 and the peoples with his truth.

THE SECOND LESSON

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL PROCESSION

#83 *O come, all ye faithful* (verses 1-3 and 6)

THE GOSPEL

Luke 2:1-20

Deacon The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.
People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor 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 for them in the inn.

In that 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!"

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. But 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, as it had been told them.

Deacon The Gospel of the Lord.
People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

THE NICENE CREED (*standing, spoken in unison*)

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Deacon Almighty God, your angel host announces that peace is born among us, embodied in human flesh. With confidence in the power of that miracle, we bring you our prayers for the church and the world, saying together, Come now, O God of love.

Intercessor That the child born to us this night may inspire us to heal our broken and hurting world, and that the peace proclaimed by angels in the shepherds' field may be realized in every place of war and on every violent street, we pray to you, O God.

People **Come now, O God of love.**

That the joy and consolation of the Wonderful Counselor will bring wholeness and healing to all who are afflicted, oppressed or in despair, and that our lives may be offerings of hope to those who are grieving, we pray to you, O God.

Come now, O God of love.

That as you entered the world in the poverty of a stable, you would instill in us compassion and courage to dismantle the barriers that separate us from one another, so that together we may build the just world you intended, we pray to you, O God.

Come now, O God of love.

That the blessed hope we celebrate this night may be the fulfillment of all who have gone before, knitting your people into shared life for all eternity, we pray to you, O God.

Come now, O God of love.

Light of life, you came in flesh, born into human pain and joy, and gave us power to be your children. Grant us faith, O Christ, to see your presence among us. Fill us with your light, that as we walk in the way of peace, we may join our voices with heaven and earth in singing songs of gladness, we pray to you, O God.

Come now, O God of love.

Celebrant Welcome, Jesus, our humble Savior. Welcome to you, the face of the living God. We give thanks that you have come not only unto Bethlehem but into our hearts and lives. Hear the prayers we offer this night and help us by your grace to share your peace, kindness and love. In your most holy name we pray, **Amen.**

THE PEACE (*please stand*)

Celebrant The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People **And also with you.**

THE HOLY COMMUNION

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

The Wexford Carol
Traditional Irish Carol (arr. Milburn Price, b. 1938)

Good people all this Christmas-time, Consider well and bear in mind
What our good God for us has done In sending His beloved Son.
With Mary humbly we should pray to God with love this Christmas day;
In Bethlehem upon that morn There was a blessed Messiah born.

(Sing of the babe) Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep;
To whom God's angel did appear, Which put the shepherds in great fear.
“Prepare and go,” the angel said, “To Bethlehem. Be not afraid.
For there you'll find this happy morn A princely babe, sweet Jesus born.”

With thankful heart and joyful mind, The shepherds went the babe to find,
And as God's angels had foretold They did our savior Christ behold
Within a manger he was laid, And by his side, the virgin maid
Attending on the Lord of life, Who came on earth to end all strife.

We invite you to express your gratitude for God's blessings in your life by bringing up your gift, placing it in the collection plate, or clicking the QR code to give online.



offertory

PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS *(all stand to sing)*

Good Christian friends, rejoice

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!**

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Celebrant *People*
The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Celebrant *People*
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Celebrant
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People
It is right to give him thanks and praise.

The Celebrant continues

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Because you gave Jesus Christ, your only Son, to be born for us; who, by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, was made perfect Man of the flesh of the Virgin Mary his mother; so that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin, and receive power to become your children.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

THE SANCTUS

S130 (Schubert)

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of power and
might, Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord,
God of power and might, hea - ven and earth are
full, full of your glo - ry. Ho -
san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na
in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na
in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore, according to his command, O Father,

We remember his death, we proclaim his resurrection, we await his coming in glory;

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with the ever-blessed Virgin Mary, Joseph and all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **Amen.**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE FRACTION ANTHEM

S164 (Schubert)

Je - sus, Lamb of God: have mer - cy on us.

Je - sus, bear - er of our sins: have mer - cy on us.

Je - sus, re - deem - er, re - deem - er of the world:

give us your peace, give us your peace.

The Gifts of God for the People of God. For all of you here present, and all of you viewing this at home, not able to participate but in a distanced Celebration of Holy Eucharist.

PRAYER TO USE WHEN PARTICIPATING IN A “DISTANCED” CELEBRATION OF HOLY EUCHARIST

In union with the faithful gathered at every altar of your church where the sacrament is celebrated this day, I believe that you are truly present in the Holy Sacrament. And, since I cannot at this time receive you in the bread and the wine, I ask you, Lord Jesus, to come into my heart. Dwell in me, gracious Christ, in the fullness of your strength, in the depth of your peace. Renew my hope. Cleanse my body. Restore my patience. Until by your grace I can receive again, in this life or in the life to come. Amen.

COMMUNION MUSIC

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming (setting for organ by Johannes Brahms, 1833-1897)
#79 *O little town of Bethlehem* (omit verse 4)

POSTCOMMUNION PRAYER *(please stand or kneel)*

Celebrant Let us pray.

All **Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

CANDLELIGHTING HYMN

#111 *Silent Night*

Candles are lit and church lights are darkened at this time.

**1. 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.**

**2. Silent night, holy night,
shepherds quake at the sight,
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Savior, is born!**

**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.**

A READING FROM JOHN 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”) Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has

ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

THE CHRISTMAS BLESSING

May Almighty God, who sent his Son to take our nature upon him, bless you in this holy season, scatter the darkness of sin, and brighten your heart with the light of his holiness. **Amen.**

May God, who sent his angels to proclaim the glad news of the Savior's birth, fill you with joy, and make you heralds of the Gospel. **Amen.**

May God, who in the Word made flesh joined heaven to earth and earth to heaven, give you his peace and favor. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. **Amen.**

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

#87 Hark! The herald angels sing!

DISMISSAL

Deacon Let us go forth in the name of Christ.
People **Thanks be to God.**

VOLUNTARY

In dulci jubilo, BWV 729 (J.S.Bach)

*The altar flowers are given to the glory of God,
and in celebration of the wedding anniversary of Camilla and Bob Murphy.*

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CLERGY & STAFF

The Reverend Greg Brown, Rector
The Reverend Cat Connolly, Associate Rector
The Reverend Daisy Colon, Deacon
Dr. Patrick Pope, Director of Music
Jessica Dunlap, Director of Parish Life
Kimberly Rockas, Director of Children's Ministries
Holly Williams, Parish Administrator
Trish Stukbauer, Director of Communications
Maguilida Rowe, ESL Coordinator
Lauren Cavins, Director of La Escuelita Weekday School

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VESTRY

Terms ending 2024: Joyce Bott (Senior Warden), Natalie Castro, Jason Evans, Carlyle Knox (Junior Warden)
Terms ending 2025: Mary Amos, Anne Binns (Clerk), Tom Cooke, Bob Murphy
Terms ending 2026: Tim Cavins, Jacqueline Howells, Niki Manke, Diana Smith



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