

Asbury United Methodist Church

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Worship Leader: Carl Bishop

* Please rise in body or in spirit

Chancel: Donna Rowe

“This, This”
Sunday After Christmas
December 28, 2025

GATHERING

Prelude “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” Hanna Noh

Greetings and Announcements

We Gather at the Scene

Leader: We have been on a journey of discovery this Advent and Christmas. As our series comes to a close, we ask one more time, “What Child IS This?” One thing is sure, “this, this...” reverberates into our time, our lives, our world as we continue to work for the protection of every child, everywhere.

Sing Together

**What Child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?**

Leader: The Magi see the reverberation of Light and are drawn to it. They, too, were looking for a new world order—one of true peace and compassion. The subsequent story of the flight of the Holy Family as refugees, running from threat of extinction by an insecure tyrant, is much too real in all of human history. Even in the return home, the child of Mary and Joseph would know the heartache of oppression that would shape his ministry—a ministry of proclaiming that God continues to be with us, that we are called to be with one another, even and especially in the midst of hard times.

Leader: We light these candles for those who need it most.

People: For all who need more Hope.

Leader: For all who yearn for Peace.

People: For all whose Joy lays dormant.

Leader: For all who need the salve of Love.

People: For all of who need this Child of Possibility.

Leader: Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this: "How do the messages of this child reverberate into our time, our lives, our world?"

People: What child IS this? This, this, is Christ the King who reigns with hope, peace, joy, and love forever.

Sing Together

**This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!**

Prayer of Invocation

[unison]

**Here, at the nativity of your birth,
give us the courage to face this moment
with the desire for justice.**

**Open us to new understandings of
the unfolding story of your presence among us.
Show us the true gifts we must bring to our moment,
as we seek a better kin-dom on this earth.**

**We pray in the name of the Child,
the One Who Reigns in our hearts and lives.**

Amen.

Opening Hymn "The First Noel" vs. 1 & 3

Signs of the Kin-dom

Leader: Peace be with you!

People: And also with you!

Leader: I invite you to pass the peace with one another and to those worshiping online, and I invite children to come forward as we do so!

We Hear the Story

Reader: In the book, *The First Advent in Palestine*, author Kelley Nikondeha says this: "Advent calls us to wrestle honestly with this truth: troubles don't disappear just because Jesus arrived. The world is still harsh and riddled with injustice." The story today reminds us that Jesus and his family became refugees as they fled from the dictator's blood-thirsty desire to remain in power. But Nikondeha goes on to say this: "Only a God who knows and shares our pain can ultimately transform it." God-is-with-us even now. Hear the ongoing story from Matthew 2:1-12:

After Jesus' birth—which happened in Bethlehem of Judea, during the reign of Herod—astrologers from the East arrived in Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the newborn ruler

of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay homage.” At this news Herod became greatly disturbed, as did all of Jerusalem. Summoning all the chief priests and religious scholars of the people, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem of Judea,” they informed him. “Here is what the prophet has written:

*“And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
are by no means least among the leaders of Judah,
since from you will come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.”*

Herod called the astrologers aside and found out from them the exact time of the star’s appearance. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, after having instructed them, “Go and get detailed information about the child. When you have found him, report back to me—so that I may go and offer homage, too.”

After their audience with the ruler, they set out. The star which they had observed at its rising went ahead of them until it came to a standstill over the place where the child lay. They were overjoyed at seeing the star and, upon entering the house, found the child with Mary, his mother. They prostrated themselves and paid homage. Then they opened their coffers and presented the child with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they went back to their own country by another route.

After the astrologers had left, the angel of God suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph with the command, “Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you otherwise. Herod is searching for the child to destroy him.” Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they left that night for Egypt. They stayed there until the death of Herod, to fulfill what God had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I have called my Own.”

Herod became furious when he realized that the astrologers had outwitted him. He gave orders to kill all male children that were two years old and younger living in and around Bethlehem. The age of the children was based on the date Herod had learned from the astrologers. Then what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

*“A voice was heard in Ramah
sobbing and lamenting loudly:
it was Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled,
for they were no more.”*

After Herod’s death, the angel of God appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt with the command, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and set out for the land of Israel. Those who had designs on the life of the child are dead.” Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they returned to the land of Israel. Joseph heard, however, that Archelaus had succeeded Herod as ruler of Judea, and Joseph was afraid to go back

there. Instead, because of a warning received by Joseph in a dream, the family went to the region of Galilee. There they settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way, what was said through the prophets was fulfilled: ‘He will be called a Nazarene.’

Choir Anthem “God’s Great is So Amazing”

Sermon “A Hope That Reverberates Still” Rev. Yohan Go

RESPONDING

Our faithful response is to praise God for this story of Emmanuel, God-With-Us, even and especially in the midst of difficulty, for God is indeed with us even still.

Sharing Joys and Concerns

“We Keep Watch” – Prayers

“Great Holy One” by Brian Wren and Susan Heafield

[sung together]

**Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.**

Leader: In this moment of silent contemplation, we lift up our hopes for the world, for its people, for the kind of kin-dom embodied by the child who became the Christ.

Time of Silent Contemplation

*Leader: Hide and seek: learn to trust, no-one’s really ever lost,
hide and seek: when we’re found, we’ll be safe on holy ground.*

[sung together]

**Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.**

Leader: Holy Living One, Child of Wanderings, Spirit of Refuge, we come to you today weary of the repetitious history of oppression, weary of a too-long arc of justice, yearning for the day when humanity will be humane. We know you are with us, for you came to our human story when we needed your message so much. We still do.

We ask, “what child is this that we follow, and who are we in the scene of this unfolding story?”

We gather at the manger one last time this year, where we know the lullaby and lament are sung side-by-side and year-after-year.

Again, we plead for your presence to break into our lives

and show us the light of hope, peace, joy, and love.
And we ask for the courage to stay in the scene of unfolding justice,
preparing the way for your reign of right relationships.

Pastoral Prayer Rev. Yohan Go

Be with us as we seek to be the Body of Christ in the world.
We pray this in the way you taught us, saying...

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 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, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

“So Bring Him...” (Offering)

What gifts are adequate for a Holy Family on the run? Our theme song says, “so bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come peasant, king, to own him.” Whether what we have to give is simply the gift of our presence and gratitude, or if we are privileged with coffers of precious resources, we give what we can. In this way we “take ownership” of our role in the scene, in the unfolding story of Justice.

Offering/Offertory “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

Doxology

**Praise God of hope, Emmanuel,
Whose saving love with us will dwell.
Praise God, who hears our longing cry;
Praise Christ, whose dawn is drawing nigh. Amen.**

Offering Prayer Rev. Yohan Go

SENDING FORTH

Just as our theme carol asks, “what child is this?” we, too, have come with our questions this day. We go into the world with answers of Good News, being the Body of Christ through our words and deeds.

We Ask, We Answer

As we prepare to go into the world,
let us ask and answer, one more time, the question we came with.

What child IS this?
This is the Truth, the Way, and the Life.

What child IS this?

This is the one whose love is the measure
of true companionship.

What child IS this?

This, this is the “King of Kings”
whose grace is the measure of real leadership.

Closing Hymn/Song “All Hail to God’s Anointed” vs. 1 & 4

Benediction **Rev. Yohan Go**

May the Sovereign of Love,
the Child of Grace,
the Spirit of Resistance to Injustice
be with you now and as you go.

Amen.

Sung Response

Together

**This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!**

Postlude “Angels We Have Heard on High” Hanna Noh

Announcements

- 1 Next Sunday’s worship leader is Joan White.
- 2 Newsletter articles are due Monday, December 29th.

Birthdays

28th Michelle Dorsey & Allison McGovern

29th Joann Mancini

30th Jordan Jones

Flowers The flowers on the altar this week are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Christine Arnold Alves and V Jean Matty, his sisters by Lee Arnold and Family.