



December 24, 2023

Christmas Eve

5:30pm

+ indicates you are invited to stand

**Bold print** indicates congregation in unison

LAS POSADAS

Greeting and Explanation of Las Posadas

Carla Pratt Keyes

Prelude      *Esta noche Jesús ha nacido*

Traditional Peruvian, arr. Caldas/Brown

Lighting of the Christ Candle

[by Carol Holbrook Prickett, adapted]

One: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and set lights in the sky — sun and moon and stars. By these stars, our ancestors charted their journeys. By these stars, they knew God was with them. In the beginning, too, was the Word. And the Word has come down from heaven to earth. By the Word made flesh, we know that God is with us. Christ has come to save us!

Tonight we light five candles to bring the fire of the stars down from heaven to earth, to nestle among the greens. We name this candle Hope. We name this candle Peace. We name this candle Joy. We name this candle Love. We name this candle Christ.

Our lives are a journey, and we do not always know the way, but we chart our path by the star of Christ. Even when faith burns low, and its promises seem too good to be true, we set our face steadily towards the light. We echo ancient words that come true anew this night:

**All: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; [Isaiah 9: 2, 6]  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.  
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.”**

One: Holy One, as we search for signs of Christ’s presence this week, help us to *become* the signs of Christ’s presence that others are searching for. As these candles provide a glimpse of the light of the heavens, help us to share with each other glimpses of heaven on earth. Help us to shine like stars in the world. Amen.

+Hymn 137      *He Came Down*

Prayer

Scripture

Micah 5:2-5a (CEB)

As for you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah, though you are the least significant of Judah’s forces,  
one who is to be a ruler in Israel on my behalf will come out from you.

His origin is from remote times, from ancient days.

Therefore, he will give them up until the time when she who is in labor gives birth.

The rest of his kin will return to the people of Israel.

He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,  
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

They will dwell secure, because he will surely become great throughout the earth;  
he will become one of peace.

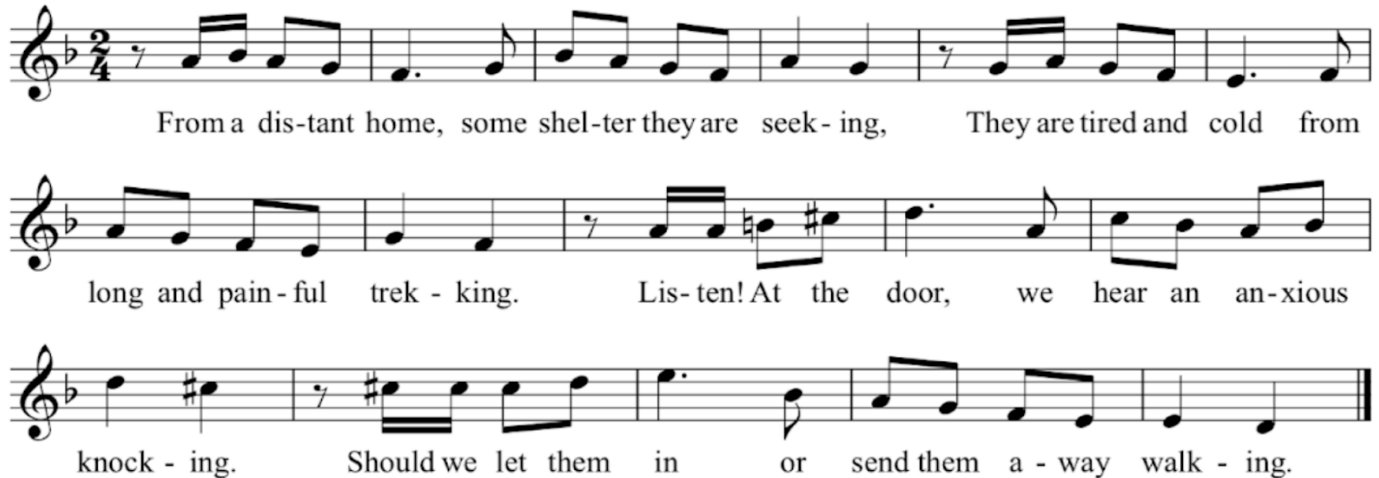
In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

### THE JOURNEY

*Children meet Carla in the chancel.*

**Sung Response** (sing seated)

tune: traditional Puerto Rican carol, words: Doug Brown



From a dis-tant home, some shel-ter they are seek - ing, They are tired and cold from  
long and pain - ful trek - king. Lis-ten! At the door, we hear an an-xious  
knock - ing. Should we let them in or send them a - way walk - ing.

### ARRIVAL AT INN #1

Children: We are tired from our long journey. We are hungry and cold and far from home.  
Will you help us, please! May we stay with you?

**Congregation: Who has come to our door so late at night? Who asks for a place to stay?  
Sorry, but our inn is already full! We have no room for you tonight.  
Try someplace else!  
Sung Response**

*"Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking;  
if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with you, and you with me." - Rev. 3:20*

### ARRIVAL AT INN #2

Children: We are tired from our long journey. We are hungry and cold and far from home.  
Will you help us, please! May we stay with you?

**Congregation: Who has come to our door so late at night? Who asks for a place to stay?  
We only have room for family and friends here, and we don't know you.  
Leave us alone! Let us sleep!  
Sung Response**

*"He was in the world and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to his own people, but they did not accept him. But to all who received him and believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" - John 1:10-12*

### ARRIVAL AT INN #3

Children: We are tired from our long journey. We are hungry and cold and far from home.  
Will you help us, please! May we stay with you?

**Congregation: Who has come to our door so late at night? Who asks for a place to stay?  
This inn is expensive, and you don't look like you have enough money to pay!  
Sorry, we can't help you.  
Sung Response**

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.  
You shall love your neighbor as yourself." - Matthew 22:37, 39*

### ARRIVAL AT INN #4

Children: We are tired from our long journey. We are hungry and cold and far from home.  
Will you help us, please! May we stay with you?

**Congregation: Enter, Mary and Joseph! Enter, holy pilgrims!  
We will gladly give you lodging.  
There is room in our home and room in our hearts.**

*Children return to the chancel with Carla.*

Hymn 115 (sing seated) *Away in a Manger*

Luke 2:8-20 (CEB)

Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors."

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

+Hymn 113 *Angels We Have Heard on High*

+Prayer (remain standing)

One: God of small things, you came among us as a tiny and vulnerable baby,  
open to all who met you.

**All: Teach us to care for the hurt and tender places in our hearts  
and in the hearts of others;  
help us to nurture your compassion in our world.**

One: We thank you for the love you have shared with us in Jesus Christ, the Light of the world.  
We pray for everyone who needs your light.

We pray for public leaders, community organizers, and police officers who seek the common good.

**All: Shine upon them and give them peace.**

One: We pray for people who work in hospitals, hotels, restaurants, airports, and bus stations - all  
who work and watch this night;

**All: Shine upon them and give them peace.**

One: We pray for people who are sick and dying, cold and hungry, lonely and grieving,  
in prison, at war, and far from home.

**All: Shine upon them and give them peace.**

One: We pray for families and friends -  
those who are with us, those who are far from us, those who need your guidance, and those in  
our memories, who now live with you;

**All: Shine upon them and give them peace.**

One: We pray for ourselves.

Let there be peace enough in our hearts and minds to receive your good news in light, in word,  
in song, and in the faces of others.

Help us to treasure the blessings of Christmas, and use us to do your work in the world,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ.

**All: Amen.**

+Hymn 134 Joy to the World

+Charge and Blessing

+ The Peace

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

**All: And also with you.**

Postlude

Improvisation on *Campañas de Belen*

#### OFFERING TO SUPPORT OUR PASTOR'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Many times neighbors and travelers come through our doors needing assistance. Often we refer them to organizations like Area Congregations Together in Service (ACTS) which GPPC supports financially. ACTS case managers work with clients to assess needs, craft budgets, and offer help with rent, mortgage, and utilities. Occasionally we offer direct assistance: a night in a hotel, a bus ticket, a tank of gas, an electric bill, medicine, a meal. Your gift to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund will enable us to keep making such gifts.



*Tonight anything put into the designated wall boxes  
beside each door at the back of the Sanctuary  
will be contributed to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund.  
Monetary gifts and pledges to GPPC may also be given online at  
<https://www.ginterparkpc.org/giving>, or by using the QR Code to the left.  
Use the drop-down menu to contribute to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund.*

9 p.m. CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT COMMUNION - You are welcome to join us again tonight at 9:00pm for a quiet service of scripture, hymns, prayer, and communion.

ADVENT CANDLES are being lit tonight by Carrie, James, Matthew, and Tommy Anderson.

POINSETTIAS - Thanks to everyone who purchased a poinsettia to decorate our chancel. If you would like to take your poinsettia home tonight, please return after tonight's 9:00pm Candlelight Service to do so. Any poinsettias not retrieved at the end of the second service tonight will be donated to local group homes and/or homebound members of GPPC.

PLEASE JOIN US ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31 AT 11:00AM FOR BRUNCH CHURCH. Jesus Christ's first bed was a manger – a place you typically find food. Still we meet God incarnate at the place we share a meal. We will look for God in one another as we share the Lord's Supper: a feast of bread and cup, eggs and fruit, fellowship, scripture, and prayer around tables in the Fellowship Hall.

HEARING ASSISTANCE DEVICES are available in the Narthex. Please see today's greeter or an usher.

ANNOUNCEMENTS about events in the life of GPPC are available through a weekly e-newsletter. If you would like to be added to the distribution, please contact Karen Mitscherlich at [ginterparkpc@gmail.com](mailto:ginterparkpc@gmail.com).

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