

*I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.*  
-Martin Luther King, Jr.

## HEROD

December 10, 2023



**THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK**

### WELCOME

PRELUDE *Now Sing We, Now Rejoice* arr. Zachau

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, my Light, and illumine my darkness.

**Come, my Life, and revive me from death.**

Come, my Physician, and heal my wounds.

**Come, Flame of divine love, and burn up the thorns of my sins, kindling my heart with the flame of thy love.**

Come, my King, sit upon the throne of my heart and reign there, for thou alone art my King and my Lord.

—Saint Dimitri of Rostov, 17th century,

HYMN *Star Child* TFWS no. 2095

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**God of life, through your grace Jesus Christ has illumined our lives and all the world with his light.**

**Yet we turn away from him, more comfortable living in our own darkness. Have mercy upon us.**

**Forgive us for the foolishness that prevents us from leaving our familiar shadows. Help us to trust in your goodness, and empower us with your truth to live as children of light.**

### SILENT CONFESSION

### WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Sleeper, awake! Rise from the deadness of your sin!

In Jesus Christ, the past is finished; everything has become new!

**Christ's light shines upon us! Thank you, Jesus. Amen.**

### SIGNS OF PEACE AND UNITY IN CHRIST

### LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

We light the first candle, reminding us of God's promise of peace on earth.

Give the king your justice, O God,  
and your righteousness to a king's son.

May he judge your people with righteousness,  
and your poor with justice.

May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,  
like showers that water the earth.

In his days may righteousness flourish and peace  
abound, until the moon is no more.

Let us pray: O God, we remember that you sent Jesus  
to be a shepherd, servant, and king to the poor and

those in need. We remember that Jesus healed the sick, comforted those who mourned, and went out of his way to love little children. Lord, may the light of this second candle, as it dispels the darkness around it, help to remind us that we are to dispel the darkness of sickness and suffering all around us.

*[The second candle is lit.]*

Sung Response no. 218, vs. 3

**And ye, beneath life's crushing load,  
whose forms are bending low,  
who toil along the climbing way  
with painful steps and slow,  
Look now! For glad and golden hours  
come swiftly on the wing.  
O rest beside the weary road,  
and hear the angels sing.**

And we all said together the plea of the ages:

**Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.**

### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage."

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child



## BENEDICTION

May God's Holy Light lead us in the way of goodness, righteousness and truth, and send us into the world to show forth the power of the Light.

**As we walk through this dark and painful world  
may the Lord give us strength for the journey. Amen.**

POSTLUDE      *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*  
Mendelssohn/Gehrke

**Bold text indicates congregational response.**



### Refugee by Malcolm Guite

*We think of him as safe beneath the steeple,  
Or cozy in a crib beside the font,  
But he is with a million displaced people  
On the long road of weariness and want.*

*For even as we sing our final carol  
His family is up and on that road,  
Fleeing the wrath of someone else's quarrel,  
Glancing behind and shouldering their load.*

*Whilst Herod rages still from his dark tower  
Christ clings to Mary, fingers tightly curled,  
The lambs are slaughtered by the men of power,  
And death squads spread their curse across the world.*

*But every Herod dies, and comes alone  
To stand before the Lamb upon the throne.*

The flowers on the Lord's Table are presented to the glory of God in loving memory of Kenneth "Buzz" Reid by Marion Reid.

### WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS

Message: Rev. Dr. Truman Brooks  
Liturgists: Rev. Mercedes Case, Rev. Allen Keller  
Reader: Curtis Gainer  
Organist: Steve Campitelli  
Chancel Choir Director: Joe Buglio  
Children's Message: Kristi Largoza  
Acolyte: Eric Clark  
Lighting the Advent Candles: The Kegelman Family  
Live Stream Team: Tim Case, Holly Grimm,  
Todd Grimm, Jake Joslin, Heidi Krug, Brad Rush,  
Zeke Shappell Smith, Cory Smith (leader)

### Thoughts About Herod

*-God did everything necessary to get Herod's attention. He sent messengers from the East and a message from the Torah. He sent wonders from the sky and words from Scripture. He sent the testimony of the heavens and the teaching of the prophets. But Herod refused to listen. He chose his puny dynasty over Christ. He died a miserable old man. -Max Lucado*

### Thoughts about Evil

*- Fear only two: God, and the man who has no fear of God. -Hasidic Proverb*  
*- Evil (ignorance) is like a shadow. It has no real substance of its own, it is simply a lack of light. You cannot cause a shadow to disappear by trying to fight it, stamp on it, by railing against it, or any other form of emotional or physical resistance. In order to cause a shadow to disappear, you must shine light on it. -Shakti Gawain*  
*- As human beings we have the most extraordinary capacity for evil. We can perpetrate some of the most horrendous atrocities. -Desmond Tutu*  
*- The real problem is in the hearts and minds of men. It is easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man. -Albert Einstein*  
*- If a man devotes himself to art, much evil is avoided that happens otherwise if one is idle. -Albrecht Durer*  
*- When you choose the lesser of two evils, always remember that it is still an evil. -Max Lerner*

### 5 Ways to Experience Christmas Joy When You're Unhappy

On the first Christmas, the angel who announced Jesus' birth declared: "...I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people..." (Luke 2:10). You can experience Christmas joy even in the midst of unhappiness. Here's how:

1. Learn from those who experienced the original Christmas. Listen to the Christmas story. Understand their hardships and stress. See how they trusted God and found comfort, peace, and joy.
2. Give and receive forgiveness. Carrying around bitterness in your soul will make you unhappy. Thankfully, forgiveness frees you from bitterness.
3. Do something creative. Creativity leads to joy because it points you toward the Creator who gave you the ability to be creative. Which activities help you express your God-given creativity the most? Music? Cooking? Writing? Do them.
4. Pursue wonder. Wonder enlarges your perspective so you can notice more of God's work in your life, which gives you reasons to celebrate! Stay in frequent contact with God during each day and night, through prayer. You'll discover lots of wonder this Christmas that will bring joy into your life.
5. Serve others. Turn your struggle with unhappiness into service to people in need this Christmas season. In the process, your focus will change from a preoccupation with your own problems to joy as God works through you to change the world for the better. -Crosswalk.com