

*(Please note that missing art work and music is in the printed version of this order of service.)*

# The Festival of the Incarnation of God

**He it is by whom all things were made,  
and who was made one of all things;  
who is the revealer of the Father,  
the creator of the mother;**

**the Son of God by the Father without a mother,  
the Son of man by the mother without a father;  
the Word who is God before all time,  
the Word made flesh at a fitting time;**

**the maker of the sun, made under the sun;  
ordering all the ages from the bosom of the Father,  
hallowing a day of to-day from the womb of the mother;  
remaining in the former, coming forth from the latter;**

**author of the heaven and the earth,  
sprung under the heaven out of the earth;  
unutterably wise, in His wisdom a babe without utterance;  
filling the world, lying in a manger.**

*—Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.)*



*Isaiah 9:2*

## Darkness

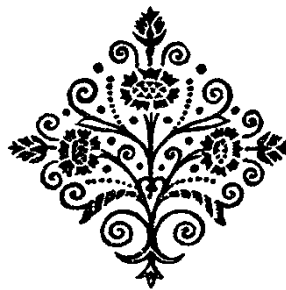
The darkness exists;  
it does not have to be imagined.  
If I forget it,  
it remains, a stain of shadow  
under my feet,  
at the nape of my neck,  
leaking through my heart.

When we would lock the darkness  
away from us with facsimiles of light,  
we only feed its falseness.  
Striking a match  
on the wall of my flesh, I see,  
after the pop and flare have dwindled,  
after-images of my face  
receding into night.

The darkness exists  
and is more than our ignorance of light  
and is more than the shadows cast  
by our pride and fear.

Yet the true star is kindled,  
a straight blaze of sun  
before which darkness flees  
and gathers itself  
into its own shadow.

—*Eugene Warren*



Christmas Eve Worship  
Old Orchard Church  
December 24, 2013

The Good News of a Great Wonder—and Scandal

**Greeting**

**Prelude**      “Behold, He Has Come”      (G. Roig)

Behold, he has come!  
A Prince descends—  
Emanuel, “God with us.”

**Call to Worship**

Birth and Death: A Scriptural Dialogue (from the gospels)

**Song of witness**      “What Child Is This?”      (traditional English carol)

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?  
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud, the babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies He in such mean estate, where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.  
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through; the cross be borne for me, for you.  
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring him incense, gold and myrrh, come peasant, king to own Him;  
The King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone Him.  
Raise, raise a song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby.  
Joy, joy for Christ is born, the babe, the Son of Mary.

**Litany of Praise in the Birth, Death and Resurrection of God the Son**

**Leader:** God sent his Son, Christ Jesus, into our history, when the time was ripe—our broken history, our bent world.

**People:** **He came as a baby, he died in shame; he now rules the universe in power and splendor. Thanks be to God!**

**L:** The Lord did not count it beneath him to become like us; he was not ashamed to become a man. He who inhabits the heavens, did not despise our frail flesh, but took our humanness to himself.

**P: He came as a baby, he died in shame; he now rules the universe in power and splendor. Thanks be to God!**

**L:** Poor shepherds, but also wise thinkers from the East fell down before him in worship. Yet in the great corridors of power, his death was plotted.

**P: He came as a baby, he died in shame; he now rules the universe in power and splendor. Thanks be to God!**

**L:** Come let us praise him! O come, let us who know him, adore him! For he who was born among us, is our Maker and Redeemer!

**P: He came as a baby, he died in shame; he now rules the universe in power and splendor. Christ the Savior is born!**

**All: Thanks be to God, for his indescribable gift!**

### **Lighting of the Advent Wreath**

**Song of praise**      “Away in a Manger”      (anonymous c. 1885)

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;  
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,  
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes;  
I love Thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky  
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay  
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray;  
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,  
And fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

**Scripture reading**      John 1:1-18

**Song of joy**      “Angels We have Heard on High”      (traditional French carol)

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o’er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply echo back their joyous strains.

**Refrain**      **Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!**

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?  
Say what may the tidings be, which inspire your heavenly song?

Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

## Homily on the incarnation of the Word

*“Light in Our Darkness: Reasons for Wonder—and Scandal”*

John 1:1-18

Ron Lutjens, lead pastor, preaching

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. <sup>6</sup> There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- <sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. <sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ ” <sup>16</sup> From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (John 1:1-18 NIV)

**Song for reflection**                      “O Holy Night”                      (Solo: Betsy Roig)

**Song of comfort**                      “Silent Night”                      (Joseph Mohr 1818)

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, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night! Holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight!  
Glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing alleluia;  
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

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, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

Silent night! Holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light;  
With the angels let us sing, alleluia to our King;  
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

**Communion in the body and blood of Christ**

**Song of adoration** “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” (Eastern liturgy, 5<sup>th</sup> century)

**(A candle comes from the Christmas candle to light our candles as we sing a carol anticipating Christmas morning.)**

**Song of anticipation** “O Come All Ye Faithful”

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.  
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels;

**Refrain: O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.**

God of God, Light of Light; lo, he abhors not the virgin’s womb:  
Very God, begotten, not created;

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation; O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning; Jesus, to Thee be glory given;  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.

**Prayer and blessing on the people of God.**



**Christmas Now**

The Maker of the sun and moon,  
The Maker of our earth,  
Lo! late in time, a fairer boon,  
Himself is brought to birth!

How blest was all creation then,  
When God so gave increase;  
And Christ, to heal the hearts of men,  
Brought righteousness and peace!

No star in all the heights of heaven  
But burned to see Him go;  
Yet unto earth alone was given  
His human form to know.

His human form, by man denied,  
Took death for human sin:  
His endless love, through faith descried,  
Still lives the world to win.

O perfect love, outpassing sight,  
O light beyond our ken,  
Come down through all the world tonight,  
And heal the hearts of men!

—Laurence Housman



**Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host  
appeared with the angel, praising God and  
saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on  
earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”**

Luke 2:13-14

### **Credits**

**Cover art.** *The Shepherds at the Manger*. Woodcut by Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)

**Page 2.** Calligraphy and drawing by Jim Malecky.

**Song.** “*Christmas Now*” Words by Laurence Housman. found in *The English Hymnal*. © 1906 English Hymnal Company (Oxford University Press) (Admin. by Oxford University Press). Used with permission. CCLI #188763)

## The Theater of the Incarnation

The Child in the crib is not a sweet romance. It is only our love and often our sentimentality which have turned his story into a pastoral romance. The Child was homeless. He was shoved off into a stable. Shortly afterward his parents went out on the road as refugees in order to escape Herod's massacre of the children. Then came the lifelong hostility of men; the Child always remained, even after he grew up, a fugitive. His heart trembled under the impact of all the temptations and fears that shake us, too. And finally this life ended as it began: he was shoved out of the world; he died on a gallows that had the form of a cross. This Man who loved infinitely, and therefore suffered infinitely as he saw men running headlong to their own destruction—they had no use for him. Crib and cross—they are both of the same wood, they are of a piece.

And I believe that all this, with all its terror, is infinitely more comforting than the soft, sweet spirit we seek at Christmas, which afterward leaves only a hung-over, let-down feeling if it is the only thing there is in it. Jesus Christ did not remain at base headquarters in heaven, receiving reports of the world's suffering from below and shouting a few encouraging words to us from a safe distance. No, he left the headquarters and came down to us in the front-line trenches, right down to where we live and worry about what the Bolsheviks may do [*remember when this was preached; now the great public worry is terrorism*], where we contend with our anxieties and the feeling of emptiness and futility, where we sin and suffer guilt, and where we must finally die. There is nothing that he did not endure with us. He understands everything.

Or do we no longer sense how knowing are the features of this face, which...later gazed upon us from the cross? He does not wear the disinterested face of those people who live in the village called "religion" far behind the mountains of the wicked world; he has the eyes of a person who knows his way about the ruins in our life. Wounds must heal wounds. He became one of the wounded because he wanted to be one of us. And therefore that Face does not vanish when the candles go out. For this Figure knows everything: of my loneliness, when I am alone or in the midst of my fellows, of the things in my life that I cannot handle, of the villain who is bedeviling me, of all my fears. For this Companion is with me in the front-line trenches. I can accept everything from his hand, for his hand knows and controls all things. And he lets down the drawbridge by which I can enter the fortress, long since forgotten, where I shall be secure.

Here is One who is waiting and looking for me.

—*Helmut Thielicke, German Pastor in a sermon, "Jesus Christ in the Front Line Trenches," preached in Germany during World War II.*

