“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”
— Luke 2:11

Bethlehem Christmas Service

Simulcast from

Washington National Cathedral
IN WASHINGTON, DC • 9:30 AM

The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church
IN BETHLEHEM, PALESTINE • 4:30 PM

December 21, 2019
Bethlehem Christmas Service

SIMULCAST FROM WASHINGTON, DC & BETHLEHEM, PALESTINE

DECEMBER 21, 2019

Please excuse any delays or interruptions during the service as international technology is yet imperfect.

The people’s responses are in bold.

ORGAN VOLUNTARY

CHORAL PRELUDE The Professional Cathedral Choir • Washington, DC

In dulci jubilo
Shepherd’s Pipe Carol

arr. Robert Louis Pearsall (1795-1856)
John Rutter (b. 1945)

INSTRUMENTAL PRELUDE Brass for Peace • Bethlehem

Tollite hostias from Christmas Oratorio, Op. 12

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

WELCOME The Reverend Dr. Munther Isaac
Pastor, The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church
Bethlehem

OPENING HYMN Sung by all, standing • Christmas Church

O come, all ye faithful

1. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, O
2. God from God, Light from Light eternal,
3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

1. come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
2. lo! he abhors not the Virgin’s womb;
3. sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;

...
OPENING GREETING AND ACCLAMATION.

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

To guide our feet into the way of peace.

Beloved, in this Holy Season we gather in Bethlehem and in Washington to celebrate the great gift with which God blesses all Creation in the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us hear and receive the Good News of Christ, and offer to God our thanksgiving in joyful songs of praise.

O God, you make us glad by the yearly festival of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that we, who joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

O God, you who caused that 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.
Angels we have heard on high

1. Angels we have heard on high, singing sweetly through the night,
   and the moun-tains in re-ply ech- o-ing their brave de-light.

2. Come to Beth-le-hem and see him whose birth the an-gels sing;
   come, a-dore on bend-ed knee Christ, the Lord, the new-born King.

Refrain

Glo-ri-a

in ex-cel-sis De-o. Glo-ri-a

in ex-cel-sis De-o.
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 trampling 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.

The people stand as able.

COLLECT

Almighty God, you show your majesty in meekness, in the birth of a child who is Emmanuel, God with us. Help us to humbly follow your Son in the path he sets before us, trusting in your love and resting in your grace. May we proclaim in our words and deeds the reign of the Prince of Peace. Amen.

The people are seated.

SECOND LESSON

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins. See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

The people stand as able.

COLLECT

Consoling God, who speaks tenderly to all your people; when we are exiled your voice strengthens us, your love sustains us. When we are captive you come as the good shepherd and liberate us. In all our exile and in all our captivity, gather us and lead us. In the name of Jesus, Mighty God, we pray. Amen.
O come, O come, Emmanuel

The birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.”

The people stand as able.

Faithful God, you fulfill your promise to your people in sending your Son to be born of Mary. Open our hearts and minds to receive as Joseph did this gift of your love. With Mary, make us ready to allow your promises to be fulfilled in us. May you always find us prepared and ready to do your will. Amen.

The people are seated.
FOURTH LESSON

Luke 2:1-7

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.

The people stand as able.

COLLECT

Read in Arabic by Zeina Azzam
Board Member, ANERA
Washington, DC

Redeeming God, you came to us as an infant, homeless, helpless and vulnerable yet safe in the loving embrace of Mary. Wrap our world in your arms that we may grow strong to care for the needs of the oppressed, the poor, the destitute, and all who suffer in this world. In the name of Jesus, Desire of Nations, we pray. Amen.

The people are seated at the invitation of the preacher.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

The Right Reverend Sani Ibrahim Azar
Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land
Bethlehem

REMARKS

The Very Reverend Randolph Marshall Hollerith
Dean, Washington National Cathedral
Washington, DC

MUSICAL SELECTION

Brass for Peace • Bethlehem

Laylatal Milad

traditional Palestinian; arr. Monika Hofmann

The people stand as able.
Rev. Dr. Raheb  
Incarnate God, the Word became flesh and dwells among us. With confidence in the power of that miracle, we offer our prayers on behalf of the Church and the world praying: Come now, O God of love.

People  
Reconcile your people and make us one body.

Cn. Binder  
That the child born to all humanity may awaken us to heal this broken and hurting world, and 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. Come now, O God of love.

People  
Reconcile your people and make us one body.

Rev. Dr. Raheb  
That as you entered this world in the poverty of a cave, you would instill in us the courage to dismantle the barriers that separate rich from poor, so that we may build together the just world you intended, we pray to you, O God. Come now, O God of love.

People  
Reconcile your people and make us one body.

Leader  
That the consolation of the incarnate Lord may bring wholeness and healing to all who are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity and that our lives may be offerings of hope to our neighbors, we pray to you, O God. Come now, O God of love.

People  
Reconcile your people and make us one body.

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

People  
Reconcile your people and make us one body.

Leader  
Light of life, you came in flesh, born into human pain and joy. 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. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

People  
Amen.

HYMN  
Sung by all • Washington National Cathedral

Joy to the world! the Lord is come

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come; let earth receive her king.
2. Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns; let east and west combine
3. He rules the world with truth and grace; and makes the nations one

Hymn by John Wesley and Charles Wesley, 1747.
The people are seated.

INVITING THE OFFERING

As worshippers exit, an offering will be received in support of Bright Stars of Bethlehem, which serves the International Center of Bethlehem, Dar al-Kalima University of Arts and Culture, Diyar Academy of Youth, and the Ajyal Senior Center in its ministries of health, education, the arts, and social services. Donations may be made in cash or by check made payable to "Bright Stars of Bethlehem."
OFFERTORY ANTHEM

The Professional Cathedral Choir • Washington, DC

A Hymn to the Virgin

Of one that is so fair and bright, Velut maris stella,
Brighter than the day is light, Parens et puella:
I cry to thee, thou see to me,
Lady pray thy Son for me, Tam pia.
That I may come to thee, Maria.
All this world was forlorn, Eva peccatrice.
Till our Lord was y-born De te genetrice,
With “ave” it went away,

(Anonymous, c. 1300)

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

The well springeth out of thee. Virtutis.
The people stand as able.

PRAYER IN ARABIC

Prayer in Arabic by Dr. Khalil Jahshan
Director, Arab Center of Washington
Washington, DC

Merciful God, Creator of the Universe and Sovereign of all, we beseech you to lead your people in the way of peace. Bridge with your love the divisions that separate us from one another. Give us the courage to approach our neighbor with trust and kindness. Grant us strength to stand firm in the face of injustice, and to boldly say and do what is right in your eyes. Keep us steadfast, confident that you are with us in the struggle against oppression. Be with us and guide us; give us strong hope and fervent faith. We ask these things in the name of our blessed Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

BLESSING IN ENGLISH

The Reverend Leila Ortiz
Bishop, Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Washington, DC

BLESSING IN ARABIC

The Most Reverend Suheil Dawani
Archbishop, Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem
Bethlehem

DISMISSAL

The Reverend Dr. Munther Isaac
Pastor, The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church
Bethlehem

Rev. Isaac
People

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.
Hark! The herald angels sing

1. Hark! the herald angels sing, glory to the new-born King!
2. Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord;
3. Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,

Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!
late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin’s womb.
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.

Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity.
Risen with healing in his wings, light and life to all he brings,

with the angelic host proclaim Christ is born in Bethlehem!
Pleased as man with us to dwell: Jesus, our Emmanuel!
hail, the Sun of Righteousness! hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!

Refrain

Hark! the herald angels sing glory to the new-born King!

ORGAN VOLUNTARY
ABOUT THE SERVICE

In 2006, a group gathered in concern for the deteriorating situation in Palestine and Israel. It was a few months before Christmas, and thoughts turned to Bethlehem and the present-day wall around the city. What if the Christmas events took place today? Would Mary and Joseph be able to cross into Bethlehem on their journey from Nazareth?

The 30-foot wall that separates Bethlehem from Jerusalem would block the way. Perhaps Mary would give birth while waiting to cross through a checkpoint, as happens for some Palestinian women today on their way to the hospital. Recognizing that most Americans do not know about the realities of Palestinian life, the Ad Hoc Committee for Bethlehem was formed to raise awareness.

This committee then sponsored events to lift up the need for justice and peace in Bethlehem and throughout the land, and to remind the faithful of the calling to be peacemakers. This service is an outcome of their work.

Today, a concrete wall not only separates the West Bank from Israel: it cuts through Palestinian land, separating farmers from fields and effectively annexing their land. Israeli roads and settlements in the region further segment Palestinian communities. Many Palestinians who have the means have left the Holy Land in search of a better life elsewhere. The Christian population of Bethlehem has declined from a majority several decades ago to about fifteen percent today. The presence of Christians throughout the Holy Land has dwindled to less than two percent.

The current situation in Bethlehem is of concern to Christians around the world who seek to follow the Prince of Peace in building bridges that connect rather than walls that divide. Today, we turn our hearts to the one God who loves all equally, and pray that a new day will dawn for us, for Palestinians, and for Israelis.

The Washington Episcopal Holy Land Committee provides information about upcoming DC metro area Israel-Palestine events, adult hour presentations, and pilgrimages to the Holy Land, as well as copies of Steadfast Hope, a resource for study groups. Please contact the committee through its hot line at edowjerusalemmevents@gmail.com or its chair at tojo@att.net.

The local Lutheran community is served by the Middle East Working Group of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod. For more information, contact the synod office at 202-417-3678 or at metrodcelca@metrodcelca.org. Or contact the group directly through its chair at nathan@wiamep.org.

Cover calligraphy by Adel Nasser, Palestinian Christian artist and member of Christmas Lutheran Church

SPECIAL THANKS

Canon Michael McCarthy, Director of Music, Washington National Cathedral
Gabriel Hanna, Organist, The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church
George Fergus, Organist, Washington National Cathedral
Brass for Peace, Bethlehem and Germany
The Professional Cathedral Choir, Washington National Cathedral

This service would not happen without the many individuals who graciously and generously contributed financially and to the many who volunteered in so many ways to make it happen.