



A SIMULTANEOUS SERVICE FROM  
BETHLEHEM CHAPEL,  
WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL,  
AND THE  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN  
CHRISTMAS CHURCH,  
BETHLEHEM, PALESTINE

DECEMBER 19, 2009  
AT TEN AM

## BETHLEHEM PRAYER SERVICE

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### ORGAN VOLUNTARY

*Allein Gott in der hoh sei ehr, BWV 663* Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

### PRELUDE HYMN

*Sung by Christmas Lutheran Youth Choir, Bethlehem*

### WELCOME

*The Reverend Dr. Mitri Raheb  
The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church  
Bethlehem*

### OPENING HYMN 87, STANZAS 1-3

*Hark! the herald angels sing*

*Christmas Church*

### OPENING ACCLAMATION

*The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori  
Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church  
Washington*

*The people make the responses in bold.*

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed.

**All flesh shall see it together.**

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.

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

O God of all the nations of the earth, we pray for the needs of the whole world, for all who hear the call of God, and all who seek the truth: for peace on the earth and goodwill among nations; for unity within the Church; and for the welfare and prosperity of the people of the Holy Land. **Amen.**

Bring strength to all who live and work in the midst of violence; give comfort to those who are in distress; give hope to the grieving, and above all, make our lives show forth your love in the world. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

### HYMN 96, STANZAS 1 AND 3

*Angels we have heard on high*

*Bethlehem Chapel*

*The people are seated.*

## FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 9:2-6

*Read in English by  
The Right Reverend John Bryson Chane  
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington  
Washington*

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 tramping 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.*

## COLLECT

*Read in English by Karen Chane, Washington*

Liberating God, you send a child among us to dispel the darkness and establish a reign of peace. May we who live in deep darkness rejoice to see your great light. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

*The people are seated.*

## HYMN 67, STANZAS 1 AND 3

*Bethlehem Chapel*

*Comfort, comfort, ye my people*

## SECOND LESSON

Isaiah 40:1-2, 10-11

*Read in Arabic by Philip Farah, Washington*

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.*

## COLLECT

*Read in English by Grace Said, Washington*

Delivering God: You rescue us from all our captivities. Your voice strengthens us and your love sustains us. In all of our exiles, may we know that you travel beside us as a guardian and protector. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

## HYMN 79, STANZAS 1-2

*Christmas Church*

*O little town of Bethlehem*

*The people are seated.*

## THIRD LESSON

Luke 1:26-35

*Read in Arabic by  
The Reverend Dr. Naim Ateek  
Sabeel Center for Liberation Theology (Anglican)  
Bethlehem*

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much

perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of God."

*The people stand.*

**COLLECT**

*Read in English by Marwa Nasser Metzler, Bethlehem*

O God of unexpected opportunities: You come to us with the fresh air of new beginning. Give us strength to embrace the challenges of this world, knowing that you will lead us to a place more glorious than we could imagine. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

*The people are seated.*

**FOURTH LESSON**

Luke 2:1-7

*Read in Arabic by  
The Reverend Imad Haddad  
The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church  
Bethlehem*

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.*

**COLLECT**

*Christmas Church*

*Read in Arabic by Adel Nasser, Bethlehem*

God of small things: You came to us as a little baby, born in a cave; helpless and vulnerable. May we look to hidden corners and humble dwellings for glimpses of your likeness. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

**CHRISTMAS MESSAGE**

*Bishop Jefferts Schori, Washington*

**HYMN 98, STANZAS 1 AND 4**

*Bethlehem Chapel*

*Unto us a boy is born!*

*The people are seated.*

**FIFTH LESSON**

John 1:1-14

*Read in English by  
The Reverend Canon Stephen Huber  
Vicar, Washington National Cathedral  
Washington*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the

life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of human will, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

*The people stand.*

## **COLLECT**

*Read in English by  
The Reverend Canon Carol L. Wade  
Precentor, Washington National Cathedral  
Washington*

Glorious God: From the tabernacle of heaven you came to earth to illuminate our humanity. In searching for the light you kindle, may we find it shining forth in ourselves and others. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

## **HYMN**

*Sung by Ajyal Elderly Choir, Bethlehem*

*The people are seated.*

## **CHRISTMAS MESSAGE**

*The Right Reverend Dr. Munib A. Younan  
Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land*

*The people stand.*

## **PRAYERS**

*The Reverend Canon John L. Peterson and Zahi Khouri, Bethlehem  
The people make the responses in bold.*

Incarnate God, your angel host announces that peace is born among us, embodied in frail flesh. With confidence in the power of that miracle, we bring you our prayers for the church and the world. That the child born to us may awaken us to heal this broken and hurting world, and that the peace proclaimed by angels in the shepherds' field will be realized in every place of war and on every violent street, we pray to you, O God.

**Come now, O God of love. Reconcile your people and make us one body.**

That the joy and consolation of the Wonderful Counselor will bring wholeness and healing to all who are afflicted with illness and disease, and that in this time of gift-giving, our lives may be offerings of hope to those who are grieving, we pray to you, O God.

**Come now, O God of love. Reconcile your people and make us one body.**

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. Reconcile your people and make us one body.**

*The Reverend Susan P. Wilder  
Member, Ad Hoc Committee for Bethlehem  
Washington*

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. Reconcile your people and make us one body.**

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, we pray to you, O God.

**Come now, O God of love. Reconcile your people and make us one body.**

Living God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born of a virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit, we pray to you, O God.

**Come now, O God of love. Reconcile your people and make us one body.**

**HYMN 100, STANZAS 1-2, 4**

*Joy to the world*

*Bethlehem Chapel*

**PRAYER**

*The Reverend Richard H. Graham  
Bishop, Metropolitan DC Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Washington*

Almighty God, Creator of our diverse human family: you fashion us in your image and command us to love one another. Stretch out your arm that the wall shall come down in Bethlehem, the birthplace of your Son, the Prince of Peace. May the crumbling wall herald the end of all barriers which divide us and may we be bound together in that love that gives rise to harmony among all people. All this we ask with expectant hearts through Christ Jesus, our Lord. **Amen.**

**BLESSING IN ENGLISH**

*Bishop Jefferts Schori, Washington*

**BLESSING IN ARABIC**

*The Right Reverend Suheil Dawani  
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem  
Bethlehem*

**DISMISSAL**

*Canon Wade, Washington*

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 83, STANZAS 1-3**

*O come, all ye faithful*

*Christmas Church*

**ORGAN VOLUNTARY**

*In dulci jubilo, BWV 729*

J. S. Bach (1685–1750)

*An offering will be collected as worshipers exit the sanctuary. All donations will go to support Bright Stars of Bethlehem which serves the International Center of Bethlehem in its ministries of health, education, the arts, and social services. Donations may be made by cash or checks written to "Bright Stars of Bethlehem."*

The following organizations sponsored today's service:

The Ad Hoc Committee for Bethlehem  
Bright Stars of Bethlehem  
The Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation  
Sharing Jerusalem  
Washington Interfaith Alliance for Middle East Peace  
Washington National Cathedral

The organizers would like to thank the following individuals for their donations:

Odeh Aburdene, Aida Armaly,  
Ziad and Leila Deeb, Alfred and Dina Khouri,  
Michael and Mona Maalouf, Clovis Maksoud,  
Wilhelm and Rafia Nijhof, Ludwig and Myr Tamari,  
and Hania Osman.

Their generosity made this event possible.

#### **ABOUT THE AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR BETHLEHEM**

Four years ago 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.

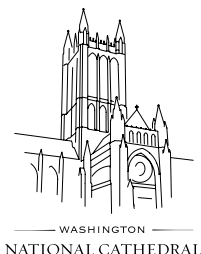
Each year the committee sponsors one or more events in December to lift up the need for justice and peace in Bethlehem and throughout the land, and to remind the faithful of the calling to be peacemakers.

Today, four years later, a concrete wall remains, separating Bethlehem from neighboring Jerusalem, five miles away. Residents find themselves cut off from relatives, unable to worship at religious sites in Jerusalem, and limited in their opportunities for higher education and employment.

The 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 Bethlehem in search of a better life elsewhere. The Palestinian population has shifted from 80% Christian to about 15%.

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.



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