

CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Extending the Love and Embrace of Christ

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT AND HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Christmas Eve

Saturday, December 24, 2023 | 4:00 p.m.



Welcome Home!

Welcome to worship at Christ Episcopal Church. If this is your first time with us, we invite you to complete a visitor's form. Our website provides up to date information about our vibrant church community: christchurchcolumbia.org. This bulletin contains all you need to join us in worship, everyone is welcome to receive communion at God's table, and the clergy are happy to speak with you at any time.

We are delighted you're here. Welcome home!

The Word of God

Prelude | In Dulci Jubilo

arr. Franz Liszt

The people stand as able.

Hymn in Procession 107 | Good Christian Friends Rejoice

In dulci jubilo

1 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;
2 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;
3 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;

give ye heed to what we say: Je - sus Christ is born to - day;
now ye hear of end - less bliss; Je - sus Christ was born for this!
now ye need not fear the grave: Je - sus Christ was born to save!

ox and ass be - fore him bow, and he is in the man - ger now.
He hath o - pened hea - ven's door, and we are blest for ev - er - more.
Calls you one and calls you all to gain his ev - er - last - ing hall.

Christ is born to - day! Christ is born to - day!
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

Opening Acclamation |

Celebrant: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People: And blessed be his kingdom, now and forever. Amen.

The Collect for Purity |

Celebrant: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect of the Day |

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

***People:* And also with you.**

Celebrant: Let us pray.

Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born of a pure 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; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

The people may be seated.

O Come, Let Us Adore Him | A Christmas Pageant

Hymn 83 (v. 1, 3) | O Come All Ye Faithful

Adeste fideles

O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant, O
Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - tat - tion, —

come ye, O come — ye to Beth - le hem;
sing, all ye ci - ti - zens of heaven — a - bove;

come, and be - hold him, born the King of an - gels; O
glo - ry to God, — glo - ry in the high - est;

come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him, O

come, let us a - dore him, — Christ, — the Lord.

O come, O come, Em - man - u el, and ran-som cap-tive Is - ra - el,

that mourns in lone-ly ex - ile here un-til the Son of God___ ap-pear. Re-joice!

Re-joice! Em - man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el.

Hymn 111 (v. 1) | Silent Night, Holy Night

Stille Nacht

Si - lent night, ho - ly night, all is calm, all is bright

round yon vir - gin mo - ther and child. Ho - ly in - fant, so ten - der and mild,

sleep in hea - ven-ly peace.____ Sleep___ in hea - ven-ly peace.


HYMN 96 (v. 1, 3) | Angels We Have Heard on High

Gloria

1 An-gels we have heard on high, sing - ing sweet-ly through the night,
3 Come to Beth - le - hem and see him whose birth the an - gels sing;

and the moun-tains in re - ply ech - o - ing their brave de - light.
come, a - dore on bend - ed knee Christ, the Lord, the new - born King.

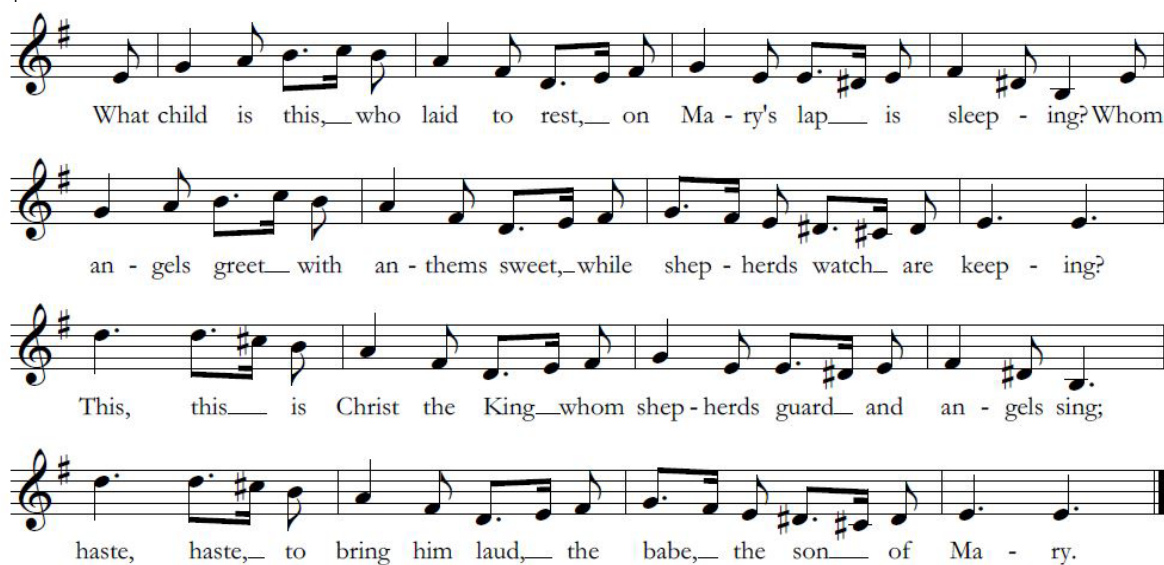
Glo - ri - a



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

Hymn 115 | What Child is This

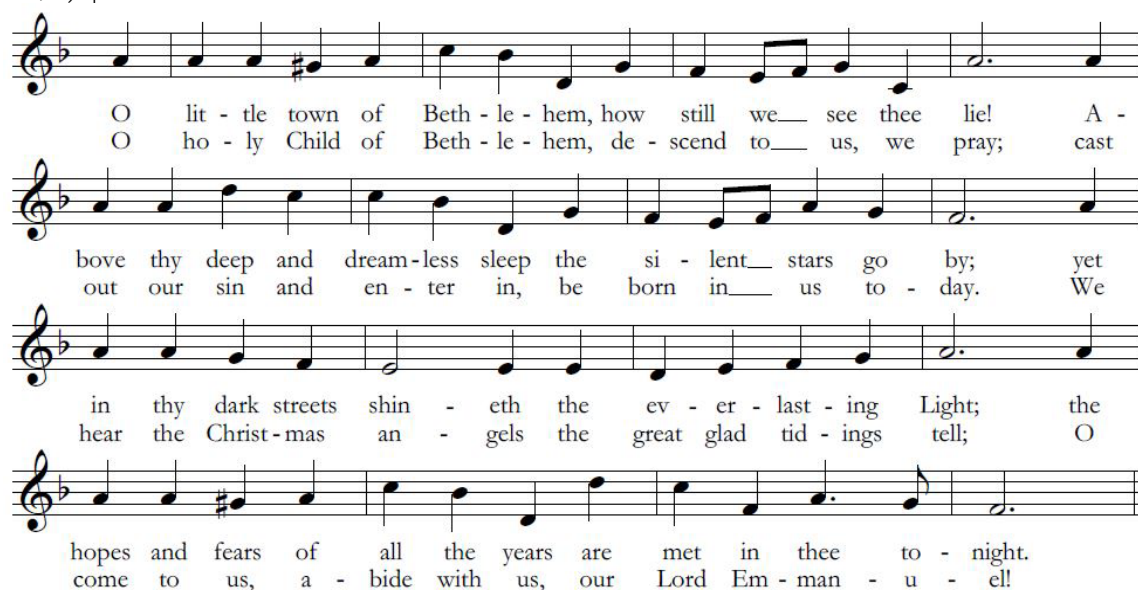
Greensleeves



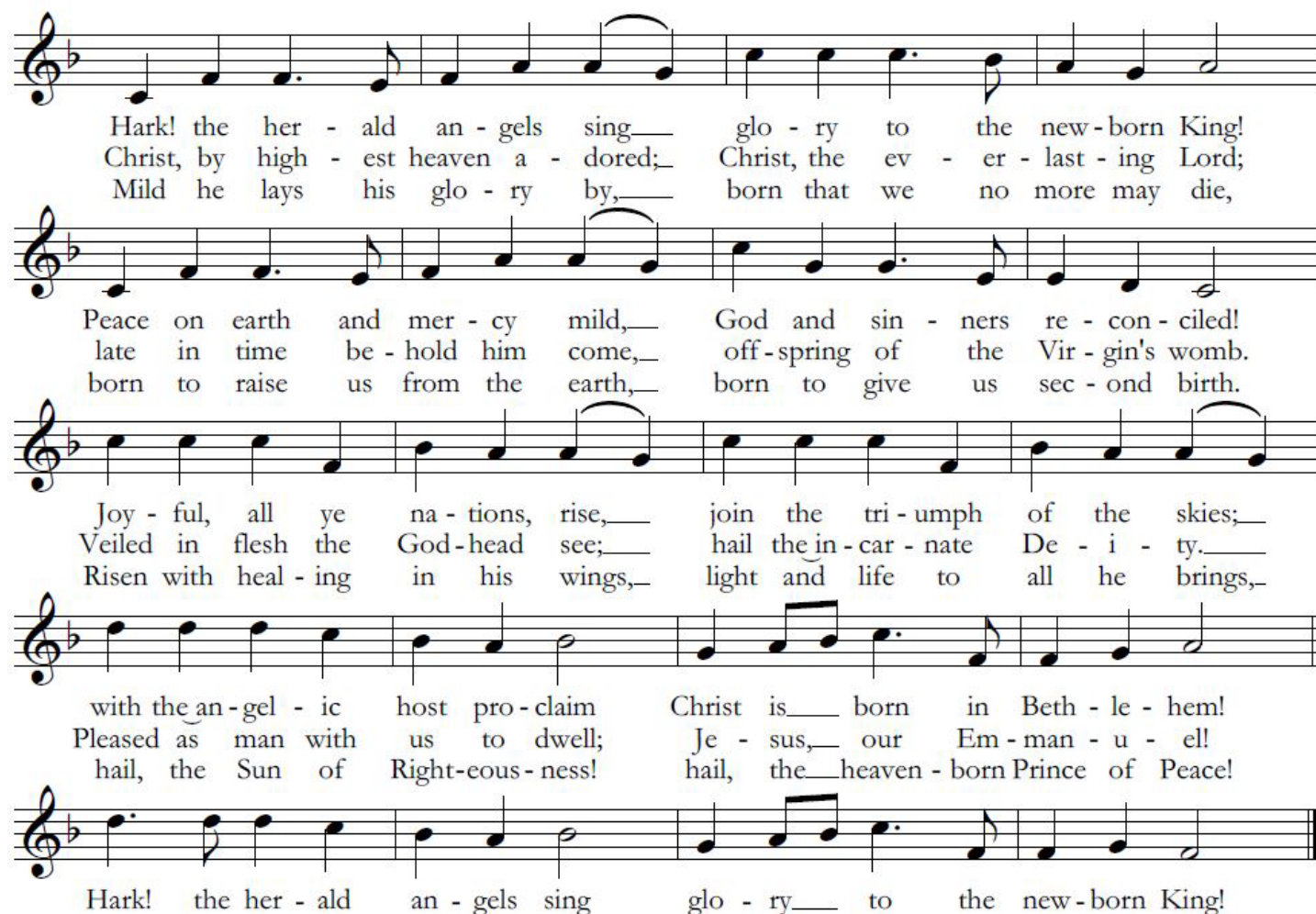
What child is this, who laid to rest, on Ma-ry's lap is sleep-ing? Whom
an-gels greet with an-thems sweet, while shep-herds watch are keep-ing?
This, this is Christ the King whom shep-herds guard and an-gels sing;
haste, haste, to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Ma-ry.

Hymn 79 (v. 1, 5) | O Little Town of Bethlehem

St. Louis



O lit-tle town of Beth-le-hem, how still we see thee lie! A-
O ho-ly Child of Beth-le-hem, de-scend to us, we pray; cast
bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si-lent stars go by; yet
out our sin and en-ter in, be born in us to-day. We
in thy dark streets shin-eth the ev-er-last-ing Light; the
hear the Christ-mas an-gels the great glad tid-ings tell; O
hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to-night.
come to us, a-bide with us, our Lord Em-man-u-el!



Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing glo - ry to the new-born King!
 Christ, by high - est heaven a - dored; Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord;
 Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,
 Peace on earth and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners re - con - ciled!
 late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of the Vir - gin's womb.
 born to raise us from the earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.
 Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise, join the tri - umph of the skies;
 Veiled in flesh the God-head see; hail the in - car - nate De - i - ty.
 Risen with heal - ing in his wings, light and life to all he brings,
 with the an - gel - ic host pro - claim Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!
 Pleased as man with us to dwell; Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el!
 hail, the Sun of Right - eous - ness! hail, the heaven - born Prince of Peace!
 Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing glo - ry to the new-born King!

The Homily | Kiona Lookingbill, *Director of Youth and Family Ministries*

The Peace |

Celebrant: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People: And also with you.

The people may greet one another in the name of the Lord and then be seated.

Welcome and Announcements |



THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory | Joy to the World

Youth Handbell Choir

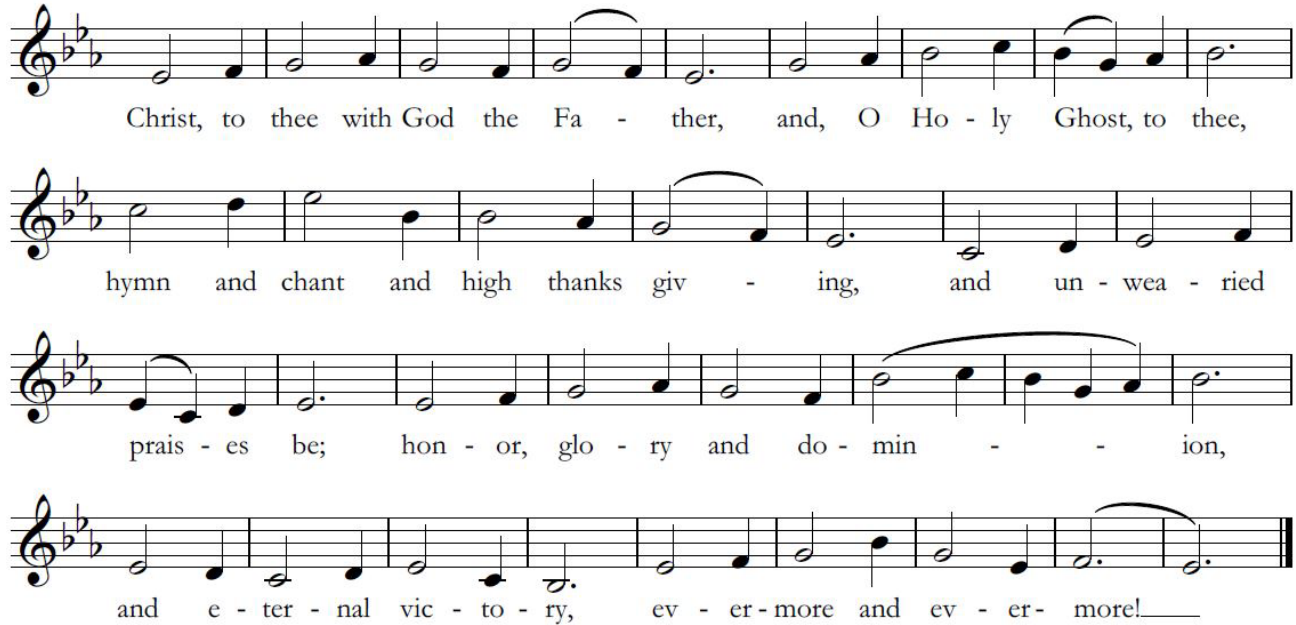
Please scan to give.



The people stand as able.

Doxology Hymn 82 (v. 4) |

Divinum mysterium



THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

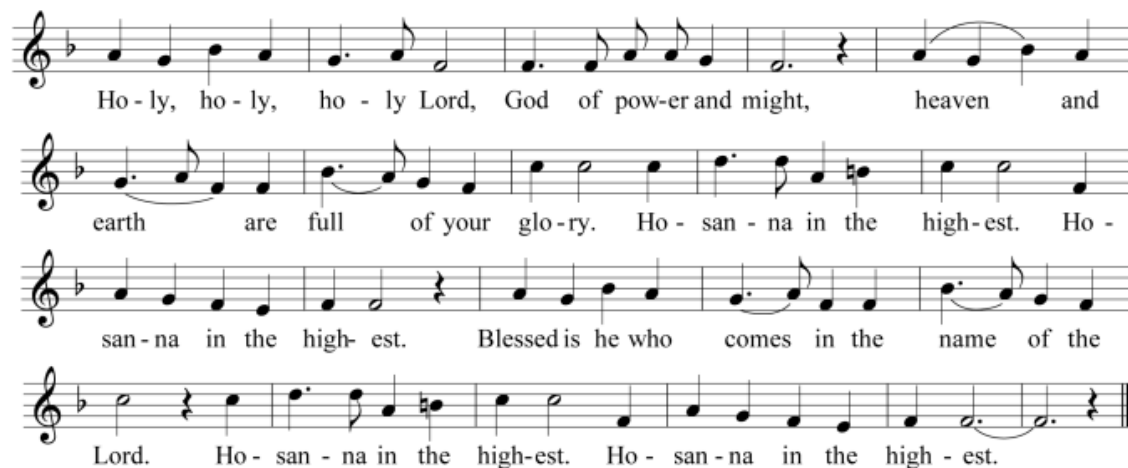
Eucharistic Prayer B |

- Celebrant:* The Lord be with you.
People: **And also with you.**
Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.
People: **We lift them to the Lord.**
Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People: **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

Celebrant: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Because you gave Jesus Christ, your only Son, to be born for us; who, by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, was made perfect Man of the flesh of the Virgin Mary his mother; so that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin, and receive power to become your children.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who forever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:



The people stand or kneel.

Then the Celebrant continues

We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

At the following words concerning the bread, the Celebrant is to hold it, or to lay a hand upon it; and at the words concerning the cup, to hold or place a hand upon the cup and any other vessel containing wine to be consecrated.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore, according to his command, O Father,

Celebrant and People: **We remember his death,
We proclaim his resurrection,
We await his coming in glory.**

The Celebrant continues

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. **AMEN.**

The Lord's Prayer |

Celebrant: And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

***All:* Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread |

Celebrant: Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

***People:* Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.**

Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, you are welcome at God's table.

You may receive just the bread if you prefer.

If you wish, the Eucharistic minister may take the bread from your hand, dip it in the wine and give it back to you.

If you do not wish to take Communion, you may come forward and cross your arms over your chest to receive a blessing.

If you would like Communion brought to you, please let an usher know.

Consecrated gluten-free wafers are available.



1 A - way in a man-ger, no crib for his bed,
 2 The cat - tle are low - ing, the ba - by a - wakes,
 * 3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask thee to stay

the lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down his sweet head.
 but lit - tle Lord Je - sus no cry - ing he makes.
 close by me for ev - er, and love me I pray.

The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
 I love thee, Lord Je - sus! Look down from the sky,
 Bless all the dear chil - dren in thy ten - der care,

the lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.
 and stay by my side un - til morn - ing is nigh.
 and fit us for hea - ven to live with thee there.

Post-Communion Prayer | BCP 365

Celebrant: Let us pray.

All: Eternal God, heavenly Father,
 you have graciously accepted us as living members
 of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
 and you have fed us with spiritual food
 in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
 Send us now into the world in peace,
 and grant us strength and courage
 to love and serve you
 with gladness and singleness of heart;
 through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Blessing |

*The Celebrant blesses the People, who respond **Amen.***

1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth re -
 2 Joy to the world! the Sa - vior reigns; let us our
 *3 No more let sins and sor - rows grow, nor thorns in -
 4 He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the

ceive her King; let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room, and
 songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains, re -
 fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings flow far
 na - tions prove the glo - ries of his right - eous - ness, and

heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his

1 and heaven and na - ture sing, and
 2 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re -
 3 far as the curse is found, far
 4 and won - ders of his love, and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heaven and na - ture sing,
 peat the sound - ing joy,
 as the curse is found,
 won - ders of his love,

The Deacon dismisses the people, who respond:
Thanks be to God!

Christmas Pageant Participants:

Corinne Frederick – Mary
Tanner Silvester – Joseph
Abby Marvel – Gabriel
Avery Lewis – head angel
Savannah Frederick – angel
Malcolm Lewis – angel
Abby Laidig – angel
Lesley Lokko – angel
Maddy Laidig – angel
Allison Whong – angel
Aston Fox – Isaiah/shepherd 2
Marcus Lookingbill – shepherd 1
Miles Barnes – wiseperson 2
Michael Laidig – wiseperson 3
Praise Oladipupo – wiseperson 1
Carson Barnes – animal
Harrison Barnes – animal
Shawn Frederick II – animal
Daniel Silvester – animal
Maddy E – narrator 1
James Mercer – narrator 2
Ava Kelso – stagehand
Ellie Myers – stagehand lyrics

Thank you to all who participated in the pageant today!

PARISH CALENDAR
DECEMBER 24 TO DECEMBER 30

Sunday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

12:30 – 5:30 pm Tabernacle of David Church – Old Brick
4:00 pm Christmas Eve Pageant Service – New Brick, upper level
6:00 – 10:00 pm Ministerio Embajadores M.E.J. – Parish Hall, lower level
7:30 pm Christmas Eve Service – New Brick, upper level
10:30 pm Christmas Eve Service – New Brick, upper level

Monday, December 25 – Christmas – Church Office Closed

10:00 am Christmas Day Service – New Brick, upper level

Tuesday, December 26 – Church Office Closed

11:00 – 12:00 pm Weekly Staff Meeting – Zoom
12:00 – 1:00 pm Virtual Coffee Hour – Zoom
7:00 – 11:00 pm Ministerio Embajadores M.E.J. – Parish Hall, lower level

Wednesday, December 27

7:00 am Morning Prayer Livestream
7:00 – 8:00 pm Adult Children of Alcoholics – Parish Hall, lower level

Thursday, December 28

8:00 am Morning Prayer Livestream
12:00 pm Healing Eucharist – Old Brick
12:00 – 1:00 pm Virtual Coffee Hour – Zoom
7:00 – 11:00 pm Ministerio Embajadores M.E.J. – Parish Hall, lower level

Friday, December 29

7:00 am Morning Prayer Livestream
7:00 pm Evening Prayer Livestream
8:00 – 12:00 am Tabernacle of David Church – Old Brick

Saturday, December 30

2:00 pm AA Meeting, Parish Hall, lower level
7:00 – 11:00 pm Ministerio Embajadores M.E.J. – Parish Hall, lower level

ANNOUNCEMENTS

To submit announcements for publication,
email to communications@christchurchcolumbia.org by Tuesday evening

For a digital copy of this service leaflet with website links, etc., visit the main page of our website.

Christmas Eve at Christ Episcopal Church - December 24

Tonight, our excellent choir and musicians will lead the seasonal music presentation before both uplifting evening services, so arrive at 7:30 and 10:30 p.m. this Sunday to grab great seats in New Brick and join us as we celebrate in joyous song!

Celebrate Christmas Day - December 25

Christmas Day Eucharist is a truly wonderful service taking place this Monday, and in 2023 it takes place in the Sanctuary of New Brick. And so, as the hymnist suggested... *"Come and worship... worship Christ, the new-born King!"*

Church Office Closed

Christ Church's office will be closed next Monday and Tuesday, December 25th and 26th, in observance of Christmas, and again on Monday and Tuesday, January 1st and 2nd, in observance of New Year's Day. If you need anything during these times, please email info@christchurchcolumbia.org or call Father Manny, and we'll get back to you.

New Year's Eve Worship - December 31

We will gather together for this final day of 2023 and collectively begin the New Year with worship and prayers for a healthier, safer, and more peaceful year to come. Join us at 8:00 a.m. in Old Brick and at 10:30 for Jazz Eucharist with the Leister Quartet in New Brick.

New Year's Day - January 1

Celebrating the first morning of the New Year is always special, so join us at 10 a.m. in New Brick for Holy Eucharist and a ringing in of the new year.

WOCC Meeting - January 2

The Women of Christ Church will have their first meeting of 2024 at a new date and time. We'll gather this month on Tuesday, January 2nd at 1:30 p.m. so join either in person in the lower level of New Brick or virtually on Zoom, and learn about the plans for the coming year. **The Zoom link is HERE**, the Meeting ID is **843 0204 4790**, and the Passcode is **cecWOCC**.

First Wednesday Fellowship - January 3

The inaugural FWF for 2024 will ring in the New Year in style, with a community potluck dinner and games of all sorts! This is also the only FWF we have until after Lent and Easter, so be sure to join us and unwind for a few hours after the holiday madness subsides. Please bring a dish that your family typically enjoys, and share your holiday stories! As mentioned, this will be the only FWF gathering until the spring, but we're still very busy! We hope that you will attend the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on February 13th and the Wednesday Lenten Supper Series throughout late February and March. Stay tuned for more on those gatherings in the new year.

CEC Book Club - January 11

Christ Church's Book Club decided to take a break this month to focus on Advent and Christmas. We'll return in the new year and meet for about an hour or so on Friday evenings to discuss a chapter or two of our current book. The CECBC is always welcoming new people into our group, so if this sounds like something you might enjoy, give it a shot! Email Ellen Hoke at bookclub@christchurchcolumbia.org for more information.

Parish Budget Meeting for 2024 - January 14

On Sunday, January 14th, we encourage everyone to join us right after the 10:30 service for Christ Church's 2024 Budget Meeting. It's a vital part of our common life process each year and we hope you'll attend so we can all see how our gifts are to be used throughout the parish. **The Zoom link is here**, the Meeting ID is **863 3493 0960**, and the Password is **CECBudget**.

Theology on Tap - January 16

The first ToT gathering of 2024 takes place on Tuesday, January 14th at Frisco and the Reckless Shepherd in Columbia. Come and join us around 7:15 p.m. for informal discussion about relevant topics of the day. Engaging, peaceful banter is our aim, and we always welcome new folks to our group!

MOCC Monthly Breakfast - January 20

The Men of Christ Church will gather at a new location for their first MOCC Breakfast of 2024. Everyone is welcome to eat with us at IHOP in Columbia on Saturday, January 20th at 9:30 a.m. The address is 8825 Centre Park Dr, Columbia, MD.

Bible Studies and Lunch - February 7

Christ Church will offer Bible Studies beginning on February 7, 2024. This Bible Study series will explore the Lectionary Readings for each coming Sunday. The class will meet in the Conference Room in the Parish House and then have lunch together at a local restaurant. Bible Study will begin at 10:00 a.m. and will be led by the clergy and/or postulants of the parish.

Meals Ministry

The Stewardship season focuses on the giving of our time, talent, and treasure, and one way to do so is by lending a hand to those in need. Christ Church's Pastoral Care Commission is growing its Meals Ministry to ensure that someone is always available to provide a meal to those who need one. If you would like to help, or if you know someone in need of this service, please speak with Deacon Denise or email her at deacondenise@christchurchcolumbia.org.

Help Us Plan Christ Church's 300th Birthday

We are gathering and planning for Christ Church's 300th year - such an important milestone for our church - and we want participation and ideas from as many of us as possible. There are a variety of committees that you can serve on and so we would like to encourage everyone to consider being a part of this historic occasion. If you have ideas, are interested in assisting, or need more information, please speak with Robin Bradley or email 300@christchurchcolumbia.org.

Columbia Community Care Takes a Holiday Break and accepts Donation of High-Demand Diapers and Baby Wipes from Christ Church

Christ Church has met the requests of **Columbia Community Care** (CCC) for a greater supply of baby wipes and large diapers. "We give out so many every weekend, mostly sizes 3 through 6," the organization's pantry manager, April Lee, told Christ Church Outreach Commission member Melanie Yaksich. In response, we made two drop-offs at the CCC pantry, taking several boxes of parishioners' donations on Dec. 9 and multiple boxes of diapers and wipes on Dec. 13 (see photos).

That dropoff included seven boxes of diapers and dozens of packages of wipes, which the Outreach Commission approved for purchase at \$277. These are vestry-approved Outreach budget funds derived from parishioners' donations to Christ Church. From the Outreach Commission on behalf of Howard County families in need, please accept this hearty "Thank You!"

CCC has announced that its distribution sites will close on Saturday, Dec. 23, and on Saturday, Dec. 30, for the holidays. The CCC shoppers pantry will close on Saturday, Dec. 23, but will reopen for home deliveries on Saturday, Dec. 30. Check the **CCC Facebook Group** for updates.

CCC also announced that it has paused taking new orders for home deliveries until it can fulfill a backlog of 160-plus orders in its queue. At the same time, CCC made a plea for volunteers to make deliveries, as soon as Dec. 30 or in January. To volunteer, please go to this **CCC SignUpGenius link**.

Or, to help CCC keep up its inventory of diapers and wipes, put them along with sanitary and personal care items in the yellow bin, marked “CCC,” inside the Parish Hall. Our point of contact is Leigh Smith, who monitors the bin and delivers its contents.

Friends of Sabina Invites a Parishioner to Sponsor 15-year-old Lydia

Leaders of the nonprofit, **Friends of Sabina** (FOS), are currently seeking a sponsor for 15-year-old Lydia, whose destitute family resorted to interrupting her schooling to help make ends meet. The girl went to Uganda’s capital, Kampala, to work as a housemaid. But now she has returned home to Sanje, Uganda, and re-enrolled at Sabina Boarding Primary School, which Christ Church supports through the Outreach Commission.

“She has high potential as she has always placed high in her class,” according to FOS, which since taking over the operation of Sabina strives to help students excel in their studies despite personal obstacles. Lydia’s favorite subject is English and her favorite hobby is netball (see photo). She comes from a family of five whose father is deceased and whose mother works as a food vendor. For information, please email Christ Church Outreach at **outreach@christchurchcolumbia.org**.

Sponsors commit to fund an annual scholarship, which for a primary-level student such as Lydia, costs \$50 a month or \$600 a year. Another goal is to form relationships, like family across the miles. FOS helps accomplish that goal through its newsletters and by encouraging an exchange of letters and occasional video calls. FOS leader Ann Marie Davis, while on-site in Uganda, arranged a video call with sponsors a few days ago.

A group of parishioners began to sponsor nine students at Sabina in 2020 and embraced two more earlier this year. Find a photo collage of seven of the nine children, pictured in 2020, on the **FOS page** of the Christ Church website. Sponsorship of Roger, 10, and Phionah, 15, came about in July during a Zoom session with parishioners. See it on our website: **“An Incredibly Heartwarming Zoom Recap with Friends of Sabina”**.

A highlight of that session was a children’s choir performance, posted as **FOS Choir July 23, 2023** on the Christ Church YouTube channel. “The children’s choir is lovely; we enjoy listening to them on campus,” says Davis, noting the rendition of “Sanctus-Latin” had been part of a prize-winning repertoire during a regional competition.

Please Donate All Kinds of Grocery Non-Perishables and Toiletries to FISH

FISH of Howard County needs non-perishable foods and toiletries. FISH provides committed support to select families in need. Please put donations in the basket at the altar or in the marked yellow bin on the breezeway between Old Brick and Parish Hall. The neighbors you help give thanks for all you do in their support.

DreamBuilders: Save the Date!

DreamBuilders will be having its General Meeting on Sunday, February 4th from 3-5 p.m. at Temple Isaiah in Fulton. We will be talking about our upcoming Kentucky trip this June, when we hope to "blitz build" THREE Houses in one week! It’s going to be great fun, and we’ve got lots of pictures from last summer’s trip to show you at the meeting, so mark your calendars - see you there!



Remember Christ Church in Your End-of-Year Giving

As we prepare for Christmas and the beginning of the New Year, it is our hope that you will be able to gather with family and friends to celebrate the season.

Although it has been a long and difficult year, we also give thanks, especially during this season of gratitude and joy, and we ask you to consider how Christ Church has touched your life and the lives of your loved ones. We pray that you will reflect on how the different ministries that abound here at Christ Church have touched someone and changed their lives and that you will consider a gift to Christ Church as part of your end-of-year giving.

Christ Church depends on your faithful and generous support in transforming lives. Your generosity makes it possible for Christ Church to offer a faithful nurturing space, enriching worship for children and adults, and a place of deep comfort. Your giving allows Christ Church to thrive and grow during uncertain and difficult times. More importantly, your giving ensures that Christ Church continues its life-sustaining ministries.

We invite you to prayerfully consider supporting Christ Church with a gift:
tinyurl.com/CEC-endofyear

With our best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,
Fr. Manny+



CHRISTMAS TRADITION

In a few days, we will be celebrating Christmas. Many of us would be traveling to be with family and friends. It is a very special time of the year, and I am so glad that our lives cross other lives and together we celebrate the joy of being together, as family, friends or even strangers. The spirit of the season is so riveting and the joy with which children make the best of the season is what makes it all worthwhile.

I was chatting with a group of friends the other day and one of the things we talked about was family Christmas traditions. That sounded a little strange to me because I don't remember any family tradition at Christmas when I was growing up. I remember that on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, we went to church, and upon our return, had some food, which was usually rice with chicken stew, a bottle of soda, crackers, and candy. For many of our neighbors, the bottle of soda was the only soda that they had in a year.

One of them asked if we (my siblings and I) received gifts. Indeed, we received Christmas gifts, but these were typically clothes or shoes, and we usually got them before Christmas so we could wear them to Church on Christmas Day. Apart from that, there was nothing like wrapping gifts, putting them under a Christmas tree, exchanging the gifts, and unwrapping them on Boxing Day.

I shared that story in another conversation about Christmas traditions with a friend, who then shared her family Christmas tradition with me. Her family exchanged gifts on Boxing Day, and not on Christmas Day, and when the family relocated to the United States, they kept their tradition of wrapping gifts, putting them under a Christmas Tree, exchanging the gifts, and unwrapping them on Boxing Day, and not on Christmas Day. Although her family now live in different places across this country, they have largely kept to that Christmas tradition of exchanging gifts on Boxing Day.

(continued)

The idea of keeping to that tradition of exchanging gifts on Boxing Day sounded intriguing. In spite of what their American neighbors did, they stuck to their tradition. The story reminded me of the extent to which tradition shapes and influences our lives;-we get used to a particular way of doing things, and so long as we find great value in it, we stick to it - no matter what.

Although my family didn't have a Christmas tradition, I do have one now. On Christmas Day, my children wake up very early in the morning and unwrap their gifts. It is always a joy to see the excitement on their faces - especially when they get the stuff that they asked for. And no matter how old they are, they still scream when they unwrap their gifts.

Christ Church has many Christmas traditions - one of which is the Angel Tree. A few days ago, on behalf of Christ Church, some of our Outreach team prepared all the items that many of you donated and sent them to the Salvation Army to be given to the twelve assigned children. Like my children and many others, these 12 could now have wrapped gifts under their Christmas trees - if that might be their tradition, too. I am thankful that, with your generous support, we helped their Christmas tradition come alive.

If I may ask - are you alone this Christmas? What is your Christmas tradition? Are you planning on being with your family? Have you purchased all your gifts? Do you have them wrapped and ready for the Christmas tree?

For me, the wonderful thing about Christmas is the tradition that each family develops and keeps over time. It is the tradition that holds and binds a family together so that even in times when we have lost family members, are far from our families, or perhaps estranged from others within our families, we may still remember the tradition that once connected us and renewed our love for one another.

For all the commercialization of Christmas, the underpinning reality is that the ability to give and receive gifts is at the heart of what Christmas is about. We gather to celebrate Christmas because God gave God's self to us in the person of Jesus Christ. And we gather to celebrate Christmas because we faithfully received the gift of Jesus Christ that God gave to us. And with our gifts to each other, we express that same spirit of giving and receiving as a representation of the very first act of God.

I am very grateful for this community of faith and all it represents. I am grateful for the gift of you - God's masterpiece. I am grateful for the gift of your families and the joy you all bring to this place. I am grateful for your faithfulness. I am grateful for the Christmas traditions you hold dear and the ones that connect you with your loved ones and many others. I am grateful to God for everything.

Although it has been a difficult year, I'd like to add that despite all our challenges, this Christmas will be special because you chose to honor your loved ones and others. You chose to remember and to hold on to the joy of a Christmas tradition - the joy of giving and receiving the unquenchable gift of love.

I wish you a very Merry Christmas.

Manny+



Christ Episcopal Church

6800 Oakland Mills Road

Columbia, MD 21045

(410) 381-9365

www.christchurchcolumbia.org

office@christchurchcolumbia.org

The Rev'd Emmanuel Ato Mercer, *Rector*

The Rev'd Denise Schiavone, *Deacon*

Kiona Lookingbill, *Director of Youth and Family Ministries*

Michael Looney, *Seminarian Associate*

Larissa Sanders, *Music Director*

Yetti Lipede, *Ministry Coordinator*

Christopher Pouch, *Communications Administrator*

Aisha White, *Parish Administrator*

Amanda Kirkpatrick, *Nursery Care Coordinator*

Nytia Perry, *Nursery Care*

Jefferson Cuarezma Flores, *Sexton*

Vestry

Jan DeBoissiere (*Senior Warden*) • Isaac Olajide (*Junior Warden*) •

Andrew Eaton (*Treasurer*) Ron Couch (*Registrar*) • Jonah Aribiah (*Youth Liaison*)

Denisa Abdallah • Ronald Baran • Tim Beaty • John Curley • Simone Kolnik • Ray Lyon • Diane Phillips-LaGuerre

Greg Schuckman • Alfred Titus-Glover • Cherry Lynn Williams