

CHRISTMAS EVE, 2023



Christ has Come



Christmas Eve Service of Holy Communion

Sunday, December 24, 2023 | 11:00 AM

781 Peachtree Street, NE | Atlanta, Georgia 30308 | stmarkumc.org | 404.873.2636



Sunday, December 24, 2023

Christmas Eve is a celebrated time in the Christian church, and especially here at Saint Mark United Methodist Church. It is a time when we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child – God taking human form and coming to live among us. It is because of Jesus’ coming that we can truly celebrate for it is through him we know the love of God and have forgiveness of sins. It is a high and holy occasion, and we are privilege to celebrate the advent of Jesus Christ, and to worship God together with you.

Each year, during all of our Christmas Eve Services, the offering collected goes directly to the ministries of our church. The ministries include our Breakfast and Supper Clubs, where we provide hot meals to many persons who are food insecure and unhoused in the midtown area. Each Saturday, we feed approximately 85 men and women at our Breakfast Club, and over 80 each Tuesday afternoon at our Supper Club. At the end of 2023, we will have fed over eight thousand five hundred men and women. We are able to do this life-saving act of kindness because of your giving.

You will have the opportunity, again during this service to give. And again, your gift will touch the lives of so many. Please know your giving is making a difference in the life of someone in need.

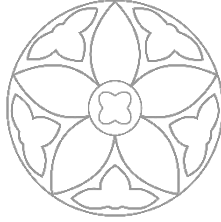
There are multiple ways you can give. You can make a check payable to Saint Mark UMC. You can also give online at our website (www.stmarkumc.org) or via the QR code at the back of this worship bulletin.

On this Christmas Eve, we light our candles, remembering that Christ, the Light of the world has come, and “shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome Him.” This is the truth of why we celebrate, and I pray you will continue to let the light of Christ shine through you into all the world.

Merry Christmas,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carolyn".

Pastor Carolyn.



Christmas Eve Service of Holy Communion

**You are invited to stand as you are able in body and spirit.*

Music as we Gather

The Welcome

The Prelude

A Tender Rose Has Blossomed

John M. Rasley

The Call to Worship

One: Beloved in Christ, at this Christmastide let it be our care and delight to hear again the message of the angels and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing, which is come to pass, and the Babe laying in a manger.

Therefore, let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the story of God's loving purpose for us even from the beginning of creation, and of God's salvation offered to us by this Christ child.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world, for peace on earth and goodwill among all God's people, and for unity within the church universal, which Christ came and establish.

And knowing this is Christ's charge to us, let us remember, in His name, the poor and the helpless, the cold, the hungry, and the oppressed; the sick and those that mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and the little children; all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or know of His love for them, or who by sin have grieved His heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but have joined the heavenly church, and are in a greater light, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom we are one in the Lord Jesus for evermore.

*The Hymn of Praise

UMH No. 234 v. 1, 3, & 6 | O Come, All Ye Faithful

The Invitation

Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another. Therefore, let us confess our sin before God and one another.

The Invocation

Almighty God, by the birth of your holy child, Jesus, You gave a great light to dawn on our darkness. Grant that in his light we may see light. Bestow upon us that most excellent Christmas gift of love to all people, and that we may have the ever-brightening hope of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

*The Passing of the Peace

One: The Peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you.

All: And also, with you.

Let us offer each other signs of peace, reconciliation, and love.

The Lighting of the Advent Candle

Choir: O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

One: Have you heard? Not the usual news on the radio or television, nor the news on social media. Have you heard? No, not the news the world tries to tell, nor the news on the cover of magazines. It is the news that have been told long ago, and is still true and current today. It's the news of the greatest gift given in love. It's the news of abiding hope, of lasting peace, and of true joy. It's the news of eternal and enduring love.

All: Luke tells us that the angel brought good news that will cause great joy for all people. A Savior has been born to us, the Messiah and Lord. It is good news not just for those long ago, but for us now and for those to come. It's good news for all peoples. It is the good news of God's love for us, for all the world.

One: We light this fourth candle celebrating the good news of God's love for us and for the whole world. This news we should not keep to ourselves, but should tell others. This news can change hearts and transform the world. It is news worth sharing.

Lighting of the fourth candle on the wreath.

One: Let us pray: Let us receive again this good news of love, and share it with others, Lord.

All (sung): Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

The Concerns and Celebrations of the Congregation

The Pastoral Prayer

The Invitation to the Offertory & The Offertory Prayer

The Offertory
Sweet Little Jesus Boy

Clint Clark-Duke, Soloist
Spiritual

*The Doxology

D Bm A A⁷ D/F[#] G D A⁷ D A⁷

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise God, all

7 D G A⁷ D A⁷ D A⁷ Bm A A⁷

creatures here below. Praise God above, ye

12 D/F[#] G D A⁷ D A⁷ D G A⁷ D A⁷ D

heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

18 A⁷ D Bm F^{#m} D G A⁷ D A

No - el, No - el, No - el, No - el,

22 Bm D/A G D A⁷/E D/F[#] D/A A⁷ D

born is the King of Is - ra - el.

Words: Thomas Ken, 1674
 Music: Trad. English Carol

THE FIRST NOEL
 Irr. with Refrain

*The Gospel Lesson

Luke 2: 1-20

In those days a decree went out from Caesar 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 in the guest room.

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

One: The Gospel of Our Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

The Sermon

Waiting for a Savior: Hear Now, the Good News

Rev. Dr. Carolyn A. Stephens
Senior Pastor

The Celebration of Holy Communion

One: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to the Lord.

One: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

One: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty (almighty God), creator of heaven and earth. You created light out of darkness and brought forth life on the earth.

You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets. In the fullness of time, you gave your only Son Jesus Christ to be our Savior, and at his birth the angels sang glory to you in the highest and peace to your people on earth. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

All:

The musical score is written in 4/4 time on a single treble clef staff. It consists of four lines of music. The first line contains the lyrics: "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might." The second line contains: "Heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the". The third line contains: "high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the". The fourth line contains: "Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est." There are three triplet markings (indicated by a '3' above a bracket) over the notes for "ho - ly" in the first line, "Heav - en" in the second line, and "Ho - san - na" in the second line. The final note of the fourth line has a fermata above it.

One: Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.

As Mary and Joseph went from Galilee to Bethlehem and there found no room, so Jesus went from Galilee to Jerusalem and was despised and rejected. As in the poverty of a stable Jesus was born, so by the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. As your Word became flesh, born of woman, on that night long ago, so, on the night in which he gave himself

up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

All:



One: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father (God), now and forever.

All:



The Breaking of the Bread

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father (God), 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, the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

The Communion of the People

The Carols Sung During Communion
UMH No. 230 | O Little Town of Bethlehem
UMH No. 217 | Away in a Manger

The Prayer of Dedication

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The Hymn of Dedication

UMH No. 240 | Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

*The Blessing

The Postlude

Joy to the World

Franklin Ritter

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Worship Team

Preaching:	Rev. Dr. Carolyn Stephens, <i>Senior Pastor</i>
Liturgists:	Michelle Levan, <i>North Georgia Annual Conference Assistant Director for the Center for Clergy Excellence and Saint Mark Lay Member</i> Madi Dunn, <i>Children's Minister</i>
Advent Wreath:	Roger Brown, Robert Gilleo, and Joseph Hackett
Communion Servers:	Roger Brown, Robert Gilleo, and Joseph Hackett
Communion Steward:	Roger Brown
Music:	Justin Bowen, <i>Interim Director of Fine Arts and Organist</i> V. Lee Edwards, <i>Guest Organist</i> Clint Clark-Duke, <i>Soloist</i>
Audio Visual:	Johnny Sims, <i>Coordinator of Online Ministry</i> , Jay Drew, Deana Hilton, Eric Steverson, and Julie Tootle
Usher Team:	Greg Brown, <i>Head Usher</i> , Joel Black, and Bob Brown
Greeter Team:	Andy and Pam Davis, <i>Head Greeter</i>

We Welcome You

As a United Methodist Church, we are proud to be a congregation with open hearts, open minds, and open doors. We strive to be a congregation that embodies God's absolute love and hospitality, proclaiming Jesus as our savior and as our model of the ultimate embodiment of God's love. We believe that all persons are of sacred worth and dignity as part of God's good creation. Saint Mark United Methodist Church welcomes all persons into the full life and ministry of our congregation, regardless of race, culture, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, family, or socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, or faith history.



Attendance

Please sign the attendance pad located at the end of your row or scan this QR code to register your attendance and share prayer requests using our online Connection Card.

Prayer Requests

Let us pray for you. Prayer request cards are in the pews. Please return your request to the offering plate or the prayer boxes in the Narthex.

Tithes & Offerings

Please place your offering in the plate during this morning's service, or use the Secure Giving App, or Saint Mark's assigned number for text donations is 844-703-1444 and the keyword is 'operating'. To give via text, text the word 'operating', a space, and the amount you would like to give. For example, to give \$25, text 844-703-1444 operating 25. Your generosity allows us to love, accept and serve the people of our community.



- Using your Smartphone's camera, scan the QR Code.
- Follow the prompts.

Year-End Giving

Any gifts to the church that you would like to be credited for 2023 **must be dated and postmarked no later than December 31, 2023**. You can also drop off your gift using the newly installed mailbox outside the Church Office doors.

Questions? Contact Deana in the church office at 404-873-2636, ext. 14.

New Year's Eve at Saint Mark

Sunday, December 31, 2023 | 10 am

We will have one service at 10 AM New Year's Eve morning in the Sanctuary. The service will be live streamed on Facebook and YouTube.

Church Offices Closed

The Church Offices will be closed from December 25, 2023 – January 1, 2024. We will reopen at 10 AM on Tuesday, January 2, 2024.

Restrooms

Men's & Women's restrooms are located just outside the chapel. As you exit the sanctuary turn left. Once you reach the chapel, turn left then immediately right. The Women's restroom is the third door on the left. For the men's restroom, pass the Women's restroom and the Men's restroom is just around the corner. Gender Neutral restrooms are available downstairs. As you leave the sanctuary turn left, take the set of stairs down just before the balcony stairs on the left. The restrooms are on the first landing. Please see an usher for assistance.

Children's Ministry Volunteers Needed

The Children's Ministry needs four to six volunteers to help facilitate our nursery on an alternating schedule. If you LOVE babies and toddlers and can provide a one and a half to two-hour service once a month, WE NEED YOU! Please contact Madi Dunn at mdunn@stmarkumc.org.

Winter Weather Donations Needed

As the weather begins to turn colder, it becomes more challenging for our unhoused neighbors to stay warm. We are requesting donations of blankets, gloves, and sleeping bags. Please bring any of these items to church and drop them off on Sunday mornings in the appropriate donation bin in the hallway between the narthex and chapel.

Fifth Saturday Breakfast Club

Saturday, December 30, 2023 | 9 am

We need volunteers to help serve a hot meal to our food insecure neighbors on Saturday morning, December 30th. If you would like to volunteer, we need you. Please contact Mary Abbott Waite at mawaite100@aol.com or 404-217-3614 to volunteer or show up at the Office doors no later than 9 AM. Thank you.



We Invite You to Stay Connected with Saint Mark

Visit www.stmarkumc.org and subscribe to the newsletter on the homepage. We send our Remarks newsletter every Wednesday, a message from our Senior Pastor every Friday, and a Sunday Morning at Saint Mark email.

El Viñedo Local Restaurant

730 Peachtree Street NE | Suite 100 | Atlanta, Georgia 30308

Across from Redeemer Lutheran

Christmas Eve Hours

- Lunch 11:30PM - 3:30PM
- Dinner 5PM to 9PM

Did you know that **El Viñedo Local** offers a 10% discount for Saint Mark United Methodist Church members every Sunday, including today, Christmas Eve? Stop by, support a local business, and let them know you are from Saint Mark.

Disciple Bible Study—Year 2

Disciple 2 Fast Track Bible Study is a 24-week in-depth review of Genesis/Exodus and Luke/Acts. The study comprises 15 to 30 minutes a day of bible reading and dynamic group discussions during the weekly meetings. This study will immerse you in 4 important books of the Bible and will enhance your spiritual journey as a disciple of Christ. Please note that it is not necessary to take Disciple 1 prior to taking Disciple 2.

We are organizing a new class that will meet 12 times this spring and 12 times in the fall. We are considering several times for the class...

- 1) During the Sunday School hour;
- 2) After the Wednesday night dinner or
- 3) A virtual class Tuesday evening

The new class will begin in late January and Paul Winslow will lead the class. The book for the first session is \$17 and scholarships are available. If interested, please let **Paul Winslow** know your preferred time at plwinslow3@gmail.com or **757-646-3278**.