

CHRISTMAS SERVICE/CONCERT
December 13, 2020, 10:00 am

WELCOME AND OPENING WORDS

Rev. John Morehouse

COVENANT *Love is the Spirit of this church and service its law. This is our great covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another.*

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

ALL 1. O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

WOMEN 2. O come, thou Day-spring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death’s dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

MEN 3. O come, thou Wisdom from on high, who orderest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

ALL 4. O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;
And fill this world with heaven’s peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Angels We Have Heard and Seen

Rev. Dr. Edward Thompson

CHILDREN’S CHOIR “Angels We Have Heard on High”

French Carol

TEEN CHOIR “Go Light Your World”

Chris Rice

ONCE & AGAIN SINGERS “Light These Lights”

Debbie Friedman

DUET “Et in Terra Pax”, Mike Costantino and Hazel Foley

Gerald Finzi

CANDLELIGHTING

Rev. Morehouse

SOLO “Angel”, Jenna McPartland

Sarah McLaughlin

SPOKEN REFLECTION

Rev. Ed Thompson

SOLO “William the Angel”, Christopher Beaurline	Rob Mathes
DUET “Give Light”, Dave Caplan and Tom Hearne	Ella Baker
WOMEN’S SEPTET “The Sun Has Gone”	Thompson
OFFERING https://vop.tucw.org/	David Vita
BELL CHOIR “Go Tell It on the Mountain”	Traditional Spiritual
SOLO “The Gift”, Andy Gundell	Andy Gundell
QUARTETS “Ding Dong Merrily”	Daniel Schwandt
WOMEN’S SEPTET “Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day”	arr. John Rutter
CLOSING WORDS	Rev. Morehouse

Best wishes of the season to everyone!

QUARTETS Linda Hudson, Doug Flam, D.J. Flam, John McWeeney, Cathy Paine, Wendy Levy, Tom Hearne, Bart Stuck

BELL CHOIR Peg Ulrich, Diane Moller, Louise Klump, Connie Rockman, Linda Hudson, Betsey Miller

TEEN CHOIR Michael Blake, Hazel Foley, Aki Lasher, Miya Lasher, Henri LaVoie, Nora Marcus, Nina Olivieri, Anna Seiple, Paige Steele, Aidan Williams

CHILDREN’S CHOIR Zoe Balmer, Kiera Colligan, Sierra Iacovella, Esa O’Reilly, Dylan Staub, Yeabsera Williams, Ryan Williams,

WOMEN’S SEPTET Trina Wong, Cathy Paine, Wendy Levy, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Linda Hudson, Beth Cliff, Carol Hamilton

ONCE & AGAIN SINGERS Steve Axthelm, Sari Bodi, Diane Cano, Candace Clinger, Joanne Coviello, Jamie Forbes, Kristi Hardin, John McWeeney, Gian Morresi, Julyen Norman, Cathy Paine, Scott Singer, Bart Stuck, Andra Verbell, Trina Wong,

Special thanks to David Vita who was the videographer for all of the pieces of this program, and who spent countless hours editing before we could present this program! Muchas gracias, David!

PROGRAM NOTES *for Angels We Have Heard and Seen*

We begin our program with the Children's Choir singing the classic carol "Angels We Have Heard" because it begins the theme of angels. Of course, there are many kinds of angels: those seen and unseen, those in human form and those not, those entities who work with us on an intuitional level. In the classic carol, the angels are those beings who deliver good news, even in the middle of the night and even in the middle of the troubles that all shepherds have.

The Teen Choir's "Go Light Your World" reminds us that each of us can be helpful and thereby bring light into our world. If you will pardon the expression, we need to be angels at times. In other words, our compassionate side needs to come forward.

Jewish composer Debbie Friedman wrote "Light These Lights" about twenty-five years ago. It is a song that celebrates Chanukah. And yes, it is up to us to keep those lights burning. Whether one celebrates Devali, Chanukah, Christmas, Solstice, all or none, it is a season of lights: candles, Christmas trees, stars, menorahs, aarti vigils and most importantly, the light that burns within, for which all of the other lights are but a symbol.

In 1954 English composer Gerald Finzi wrote "Et in Terra Pax" (Peace on Earth). It is based on a poem of Robert Bridges in which someone who is walking in the countryside imagines what it was like for those shepherds of old who heard a distant music. It speaks about how the same longing for peace that existed two thousand years ago still exists today. It makes each Christmas (holiday season) relevant because we need to articulate that deep longing which resides in us. Thanks to Mike for recommending this piece.

The piece around which this concert is built is "William the Angel", composed by Connecticut composer Rob Mathes. It is a fictitious story about an angel sent by God on a 20-year mission. His job is to deliver a message to various people that they are loved by God. As the story begins, William has a broken wing and is sitting in the middle of the highway. He is completely frustrated because it is almost time for him to go back to the celestial realms and he claims that people are too dense or distracted to get the message. Feeling very discouraged, he remembers the song of the angels (heard in the piano part) and is then inspired to go on. He asks to be sent anywhere in the world to complete his mission. While we tend to think of angels as non-physical entities, I would suggest that we have all met angels in the flesh. It is that compassionate part of us which reaches out in times of need. Lincoln called it "the angels of our better nature". Like Scrooge who was transformed into a different person, it is that sense of compassion which allows William to go on.

Sarah McLaughlin's song, "Angel", sung by Jenna McPartland, is a good example of a person who spreads light.

Dave Caplan and Tom Hearne sing "Give Light" – did you catch that Joe Biden cited this song in his speech – we can each be the bearer of good news. In spite of the challenges

we face, there is actually a lot of good news to share. And it is the good news that we need to stay focused on.

“The Sun Has Gone” is a short piece that celebrates the Solstice. The Bell Choir offers “Go Tell It on the Mountain”. While rung instead of sung, the original set of words were about hope in a bright future. The cheerful tune brings home that point.

Andy’s “Gift” encapsulates the sentiment that the most important gift of the holidays is our self; i.e., it is not presents but presence that we offer each other.

The Quartets sing a newly-composed piece by Daniel Schwandt, “Ding Dong Merrily”. We can hear Glorias! – a jubilant way of saying: it will all be OK! Even in the darkest of times there are things to be happy about. And indeed, we have much to be grateful for.

“Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day” had its origins in Medieval times. It was a song with eleven verses describing various episodes in the life of Jesus. However, because of the reference to the future, “tomorrow shall be”, it is thought by many to be a reference to the part of integrating the kindness of the season in our everyday lives. Still others believe that because of the dance element it has pre-Christian roots and that the element of dancing around a Solstice fire would have spawned movement and a closer link with the natural world. Still others look at the bridegroom and bride images as a point of departure, meaning that those symbols represent our ‘engagement’ with Life. Whatever layer you wish to hear in this song, it is there for you. And may the dance that we have with life be a good one in this season and in the new year!

Poinsettias

Thank you, Linda Hudson,
for providing the holiday trimmings
and for all your good works on behalf of this community

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