



First Sunday of Christmas

December 31, 2023

Preparation for Worship

*Who would think that what was needed
to transform and save the earth
might not be a plan or army,
proud in purpose, proved in worth?
Who would think, despite derision,
that a child should lead the way?
God surprises earth with heaven,
coming here on Christmas Day.*

— John Bell and Graham Maule

Voluntary

Variations on the “Sussex Carol”

Raymond Haan
(b. 1938)

Greeting

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

✦ Call to Worship

Christ is born! Give him glory!
Christ has come down from heaven! Let us receive him.
Christ is now on earth! Exalt him!
**O you nations, praise him in joy,
for he has been glorified!
O earth, sing to the Lord!**

✦ Hymn 143 [\(see page 7\)](#)

Angels from the Realms of Glory

REGENT SQUARE

✠ Prayer of Confession

God of grace and truth,
in Jesus Christ you came among us
as light shining in darkness.
We confess that we have not welcomed the light,
or trusted good news to be good.
We have closed our eyes to glory in our midst,
expecting little, and hoping for less.

Forgive our doubt, and renew our hope,
so that we may receive the fullness of your grace,
and live in the truth of Christ the Lord.

silent prayer

Holy One, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

✠ Declaration of Forgiveness

Believe the Good News. **In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.**

✠ Hymn 123 [\(see page 8\)](#)

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

CAROL

✠ The Peace

Peace be with you. **Peace be with all.**

Conversation with Children

Infants - Age 4 may go to the Nursery in Room 106.

Prayer for Illumination

First Reading

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

O.T. pg. 692

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Solo

The Virgin's Slumber Song

Max Reger
(1873-1916)

Amid the roses Mary sits and rocks her Jesus child,
While amid the treetops sigh the breeze so warm and mild.
And soft and sweetly sings a bird upon the bough:
Ah, baby, dear one, slumber now!

Happy is Thy laughter, holy is Thy silent rest,
Lay Thy head in slumber, fondly on Thy mother's breast!
Ah, baby, dear one, slumber now!

—Poetry by Martin Boelitz

Gospel Reading

Luke 2:22-40

N.T. pg. 59

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Sermon

First Things First

Keatan King

silence and stillness

✠ Hymn 134 [\(see page 9\)](#)

Joy to the World

ANTIOCH

✠ Affirmation of Faith

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

The Lord's Prayer

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;
for Thine is the Kingdom,
and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Offering

Offertory

Some Children See Him

Alfred Burt
(1920-1954)

Some children see Him lily white,
The Baby Jesus born this night.
Some children see Him lily white,
With tresses soft and fair.

Some children see Him bronzed and brown,
The Lord of Heaven' to earth come down;
Some children see Him bronzed and brown,
With dark and heavy hair.

Some children in each different place
Will see the Baby Jesus' face
Like theirs, but bright with heavenly grace,
And filled with holy light.

O lay aside each earthly thing,
And with thy heart as offering,
Come worship now the Infant King,
'Tis love that's born today.

—Lyric by Wihla Hutson

✦ Hymn 110 [\(see page 10\)](#)

Love Has Come

BRING A TORCH

✦ Prayer of Thanksgiving

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Loving God,
we give you thanks for Jesus Christ,
the Word made flesh.

**Clothe us with compassion, kindness, humility,
meekness, and patience,
that we might extend Christ's love to others. Amen.**

✦ Hymn 136 [\(see page 11\)](#)

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

GO TELL IT

✦ Charge and Blessing

Please be seated in silence for the closing voluntary, or kindly depart quietly.

Closing Voluntary

Noël: *Ou s'en vont ces gais Bergers*
("Where are the Happy Shepherds Going?")

Jean-François Dandrieu
(1682-1788)

SERVING TODAY

Pastors

Keatan King | John Wurster

Musicians

Julia Fox, soloist | Matthew Dirst, organist

FLOWERS

The flowers today are given by Guy and Melissa Aldrich to the glory of God and in loving memory of Guy's father G. Frank Aldrich, Jr.

WORSHIP NOTES

Today's Lectionary readings:

- Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3 – *The Lord will give you a new name; you will be a crown of beauty.*
- Psalm 148 – *Praise the Lord, all creation! God is exalted in heaven and earth.*
- Galatians 4:4–7 – *Through the Son and the Spirit, we may call God Abba, Father.*
- Luke 2:22–40 – *Jesus is presented in the temple; Simeon and Anna rejoice.*

IN OUR PRAYERS

St. Philippians and their families – Bill & Karen Morris; Helen Deleon; Jan Ostendorf; Dick Nunn; Mark Takayama; Ben Dees; Shirley Coffman; Joe Harwood; Kathryn Harwood; Nancy Johnson; Beverly Baker; Beverly Hudson; Eleanor Grant; Judy Nunn; Molly Boren-Whitney; Carolyn Vestal; Don Padgett; Steve Adger; Judith Crane; Arlette Keene; Mezgebe Gebray; Alice Woodall-Chisholm – cousin of Mary McGuire; Sheila Kinsky and her children – sister of Bill Connolly; John Palisin – brother of Peg Palisin; Vera Moore – mother of Chuck Johnson; Carla Burns – cousin of Sharon Webb; Robert Kirtley – father of Amanda Kirtley; Susan Everhart – niece of Nancy Everhart Johnson; Ann Perenyi – mother of Lad Perenyi; and Ann Perkins Cloud – cousin of Stephen Paine.

Homebound – Elizabeth Arp; John Bobbitt; Joan Boelens; Edith Patterson; Joyce Randolph; George and Lorraine Scott; Mary Sinderson; and Sondra Sullivan.

Friends of St. Philippians – Kenneth and Donna Benton – friends of William Rower; Magdalena Rustomji – friend of Mickey & Ken Meyers; Caitlan Prescott – friend of Mary McGuire; Mary Watters – friend of Jacqueline Hamilton Taylor; Tom Barnett – friend of Robin and Gary Willis; Joyce Freudenberg and Annie & Sidney Roach – friends of Stephen Paine; Jacqueline Boyd – friend of Kate Burkart; Betsy Shear Lewis – friend of Laney Miller; and Shirley Stubblefield – friend of Barbara Runge.

If you have a pastoral care need or a prayer request you would like to share, please email: deacons@saintphilip.net

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cover art by Micah Meyers.

Music reprints and online streaming by permission under OneLicense.net account A-720890.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES

**SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES START AT
9:45 A.M. UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED**

**SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES WILL BE ON
RECESS BEGINNING DECEMBER 24 AND
RETURN JANUARY 7**

GODLY PLAY—Ages 3—Kindergarten—Room 104

ELEMENTARY—Grades 1-5—Room 105

YOUTH—Grades 6-12—Room 205

FAITH & LIFE - Room 200—An adult class exploring how what we believe informs how we live. Using the short stories in *The Gift of Hard Things: Finding Grace in Unexpected Places* by Mark Yaconelli, participants will read a short text in class and then engage in conversation as a group. There are no materials required and no preparation is needed.

ADULT BIBLE STUDY—Room 204—We resume our study of the Kingdom of Judah at 2 Kings 18 with the story of King Hezekiah in Dr. Robert Alter's *Ancient Israel, The Former Prophets* (2013). Join us from **9:30 a.m. - 10:40 a.m.** to deepen our understanding of God's faithfulness to God's people from Dr. Alter's translation and commentary on the Biblical Hebrew. All are welcome.

CHURCH & SOCIETY—Room 201—Join us from **9:30 a.m. - 10:40 a.m.** with presentations in person and by Zoom. Church & Society will not meet the Sundays Dec. 24 or Dec. 31. - Church & Society will resume classes Jan. 7 - "The State of St. Philip Presbyterian Church - Looking back at 2023, looking forward to 2024" - presented by the Rev. Dr. John Wurster. Email Mickey Meyers if you would like to join any of the classes: churchsociety_stphilip@comcast.net.

CHILDREN'S CHAPEL—We will have Children's Chapel the second and fourth Sundays after *Conversation with Children*. In the Children's Chapel, our young disciples learn the whos, whats, wheres, whens and whys of worship, while praying, singing, and hearing God's word at an age-appropriate level. Children return to join the congregation in the first few pews on the lectern side of the church for the last hymn.

ST. PHILIP DURING THE WEEK

LAMBETH STUDY—Keatan King leads young adults in study every Monday evening at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. It is a time of study, reflection, and prayer. If you would like more details, email Keatan King at:

keatan@saintphilip.net.

MIDWEEK BIBLE STUDY— Wednesday Bible Study with John Wurster is on recess until **January 10, 2024**.

WOMEN'S MONTHLY BOOK CLUB—This self-led, interactive group produces lively discussions and wonderful fellowship. The next meeting is **Jan. 11** at 7:00 p.m. and we will discuss *Exiles* by Jane Harper. Watch your email for details of the next meeting. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Nina Lambright at: nnl@lambrightlaw.com.

PRESBYTERIAN MEN'S WEEKLY FELLOWSHIP—**This class is on recess beginning Dec. 22 through Jan. 5.** Men of all ages are welcome to participate in this self-led group. The Men's Weekly Fellowship meets each Friday in person in the office Conference Room and via Zoom at 11:45 a.m. We are studying *They Walked With God* by Max Lucado. The book talks about 40 people in the Bible and how God used them. It lets us know that he has a place for us too. If you would like to join them please contact Gary Gardner at ggardne148@aol.com.

SOCIAL JUSTICE STUDY GROUP—The next and last meeting of the Social Justice Study Group's discussion of systemic racism will meet on Monday, **Jan. 8**, 7-8 p.m. by zoom. Interested folks can contact Sara Jean Jackson (sjj10223@gmail.com) to join this group list. Beginning in February the study will focus on the growing awareness in this country of "Christian nationalism."

Save the Date and the Planet! On January 13 the St. Philip EarthCare team will host a seminar entitled "Becoming Carbon Neutral in Your Church and in Your Life". This will take place from 10:00 am until Noon with a light lunch offered (financial contribution welcomed). Several other churches in Presbytery of New Covenant will join us and participate in this seminar. Please put this on your calendar and join us. Further information will be available in upcoming editions of Philip-Eye. Please RSVP to text or email John Hartman at 832-563-8024 or jshartman01@gmail.com

1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er
 2 Shep - herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your
 3 Sag - es, leave your con - tem - pla - tions; bright - er vi - sions
 4 All cre - a - tion, join in prais - ing God the Fa - ther,

all the earth; you, who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry,
 flocks by night, God with us is now re - sid - ing;
 beam a - far; seek the great de - sire of na - tions;
 Spir - it, Son, ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing

now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
 yon - der shines the in - fant light: come and wor - ship,
 you have seen his na - tal star:
 to the e - ter - nal Three in One:

come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born king!

This familiar carol was first published as a poem in the Christmas Eve 1816 issue of a newspaper the author edited in Sheffield, England. The tune name celebrates the location of a prominent Presbyterian Church in London, sometimes called the "Presbyterian cathedral."

TEXT: Stanzas 1–3, James Montgomery, 1816, 1825; stanza 4, *Salisbury Hymn Book*, 1857
 MUSIC: Henry Thomas Smart, 1867

REGENT SQUARE
 8.7.8.7.8.7

[Return to page 2](#)

Hymn 123

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

CAROL

1 It came up-on the mid- night clear, that glo- rious song of old,
 2 Still through the clo - ven skies they come, with peace-ful wings un - furled,
 3 Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suf-fered long;
 4 And you, be-neath life's crush-ing load, whose forms are bend-ing low,
 5 For lo, the days are has-tening on, by proph-ets seen of old,
 from an - gels bend - ing near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:
 and still their heaven-ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world:
 be - neath the heaven-ly hymn have rolled two thou-sand years of wrong;
 who toil a - long the climb-ing way with pain - ful steps and slow,
 when with the ev - er - cir-cling years shall come the time fore - told,
 "Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven's all-gra-cious King":
 a - bove its sad and low - ly plains they bend on hov-ering wing,
 and we at war on earth hear not the tid - ings that they bring;
 look now, for glad and gold-en hours come swift-ly on the wing:
 when peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen-dors fling,
 the world in sol - emn still - ness lay, to hear the an - gels sing.
 and ev - er o'er its Ba - bel sounds the bless-ed an - gels sing.
 O, hush the noise and cease the strife to hear the an - gels sing!
 O, rest be-side the wea - ry road, and hear the an - gels sing.
 and the whole world give back the song which now the an - gels sing.

The "it" of the first line of this text by a Unitarian minister does not refer to the birth of Jesus, but to "that glorious song of old," the angelic tidings of peace on earth. The restored third stanza laments how often the noise of human strife has obscured that message.

TEXT: Edmund Hamilton Sears, 1849, alt.
 MUSIC: Richard Storrs Willis, 1850

CAROL
 CMD
 (alternate tune: NOEL)

[Return to page 2](#)

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive
 2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their songs
 3 No more let sins and sor - rows grow, nor thorns in - fest
 4 He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the na -

her king; let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room,
 em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings flow
 tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous - ness

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

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,

While Isaac Watts did not write this text strictly for Christmas use, he did purposely cast his paraphrase of Psalm 98:4-9 in Christian terms, titling it "The Messiah's coming and kingdom." So "the Lord" here is Jesus Christ, rather than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

TEXT: Isaac Watts, 1719, alt.
 MUSIC: Attr. George Frederick Handel, 1742; arr. Lowell Mason, 1836

ANTIOCH
 CM with repeat

[Return to page 3](#)

Hymn 110

Love Has Come

BRING A TORCH



1 Love has come: a light in the dark - ness!
 2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der.
 3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us!



Love shines forth in the Beth - le - hem skies. See, all
 Love is God now a - sleep in the hay. See the
 Love is life ev - er - last - ing and free. Love is



heav - en has come to pro - claim it; hear how their song of
 glow in the eyes of his moth - er; what is the name her
 Je - sus with - in and a - mong us. Love is the peace our



joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to you, a
 heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the name she
 hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the gift of



Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.
 whis - pers. Love! Love! Je - sus, Em - man - u - el.
 Christ-mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

Here is a chance to sing a familiar French carol tune with new words, the most important clearly being "Love." The senses "seen and heard" (as in Acts 4:20 and elsewhere) organize the first two stanzas, while the third holds the summary statement: "Love is the gift of Christmas."

TEXT: Ken Bible, 1996
 MUSIC: French melody; arr. Eric T. Myers, 2012
 Text © 1996 LNWhymns.com (admin. Music Services)

BRING A TORCH
 9.9.10.9.9.8

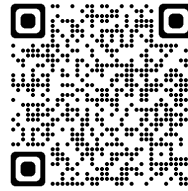
[Return to page 4](#)

Hymn 136 (see page 12)

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

GO TELL IT

Refrain



Welcome to Worship at St. Philip

Please register your attendance by scanning the QR code or by visiting the Guest Book tab at saintphilip.net.

AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST,
we seek to be an inclusive,
grace-filled community,
engaging the world with open minds,
willing hands and generous hearts.

WE LONG
for deeper faith,
vibrant hope
and boundless love
for everyone, every day, everywhere.

Thank you for joining us today! We hope that you find our worship together to be joyous, meaningful, and thought-provoking. **Children of all ages** are welcome to worship with their families. Activity bags containing worship aids for children are available in the narthex on the way into the sanctuary.

Nursery care is available throughout the morning from 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Infants to age 4 are invited to our Nursery which is staffed by professional childcare providers. Please find our Nursery in Room 106 of the Education Building along the Sunday School Classroom hallway on the first floor. An usher or a greeter will be happy to direct you there.

A Hearing Loop is installed within the sanctuary. If you have a hearing aid equipped with a telecoil, please activate your "T switch" to hear the worship service most clearly. If you need assistance with hearing the service clearly and do not have a t-coil equipped hearing aid, please ask an usher for wireless headphones. **LARGE PRINT COPIES OF TODAY'S HYMNS ARE IN THE NARTHEX.**

Connect with St. Philip through saintphilip.net and our social media. To join our e-mail list for regular news updates, send a note to lorrie@saintphilip.net.

If you are interested in joining St. Philip Presbyterian Church by profession of faith, by reaffirming your faith, or by transferring your membership, please speak with one of the ministers today or call the church office during the week. **The Session meets the third Sunday of each month after the 11:00 worship service in Room 100 for the purpose of receiving new members.**

Worship with us, whenever, wherever. Our 11:00 a.m. Sunday service is live-streamed at saintphilip.net. We also live-stream a midweek prayer on Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m. Services can be viewed live or later in our video archives.

Chancel flowers—If you interested in sponsoring the chancel flowers on Sunday morning. The Flower Calendar for 2024 is digital visit our website at <https://saintphilip.net/Calendar.html> or scan the QR code to the right. If you have any questions, contact Lorrie Castle at 713-622-4807 or lorrie@saintphilip.net.



Contributions, pledge payments, communion gifts and other donations to support the Church can be made anytime through our website, text "SPPC" to 73256 and follow the prompts, or sent to the Church Office at 4807 San Felipe, Houston, TX 77056.

ATTENTION STOCK DONORS!

Frost Bank is St. Philip's broker service. We ask you to call: Yvette Webb at Frost Bank – 713-388-1231 for transaction information. Our account number is #037-293183.

Please let the bookkeeper know you are making a stock donation. You may email bookkeeper@saintphilip.net.

If you have any questions, you may always contact Rhonda Sands, rsands2701@aol.com or 713-315-0096.