

# FIRST PARISH CHURCH OF GROTON

Sunday, December 21, 2008

## A Thought as the Service Begins:

It is a lonely  
Road to Bethlehem  
That must be walked slowly  
And untalked . . .  
Where no bright light  
Or angel song intrudes  
Ahead of cue  
To wrongly claim arrival of the dawn  
Before the night is walked  
By each of us  
On through. (Francis Anderson)

*(We ask that you turn off the ringers on your cell phones, beepers and electronic devices. Please join us in a time of quiet during the prelude.)*

**Ringing of the Church Bell** Rebecca Pike, Bell-Ringer

**Prelude** Noels for Flute and Piano (arr. Gilliam, McCaskill)

**Welcome and Announcements** Annie Rayhill, Worship Leader

## \*Hymn O Come All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
O come, ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
Come and behold him, born the king of angels;  
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Lo, humble shepherds, Hasting to his cradle,  
Leaving their flocks in the fields, draw near.  
We, too, with gladness, Thither bend our footsteps,  
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:

Glory to God in the highest,  
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord

**Lighting of the Chalice and Advent Wreath** Jim Frey

**Lighting of the Menorah** Stuart Schulman

## Response Hymn *(please remain seated)*

Spirit of Life, come unto me.  
Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.  
Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;  
Move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.  
Roots hold me close; wings set me free;  
Spirit of life, come to me, come to me.

## Offertory and Gathering of Guest at Your Table Gifts

We Three Kings of Orient Are (trad., arr. Gilliam, McCaskill)

## \*Offertory Response (Melinda Green/Shawn McCann)

We thank each other for these gifts  
Which makes our giving bless-ed.  
We bless the works our gifts sustain  
And pray they ripple outward.  
With grace and generosity  
We show our faith enacted.

## Hymn Do You Hear What I Hear

Said the night wind to the little lamb,  
do you see what I see  
Way up in the sky, little lamb,  
do you see what I see  
A star, a star, dancing in the night  
With a tail as big as a kite, with a tail as big as a kite

Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy,  
do you hear what I hear  
Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy,  
do you hear what I hear  
A song, a song, high above the trees

With a voice as big as the sea, with a voice as big as the sea.

Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king,  
do you know what I know  
In your palace warm, mighty king,  
do you know what I know  
A Child, a Child shivers in the cold  
Let us bring Him silver and gold, let us bring Him silver and gold.

Said the king to the people everywhere,  
listen to what I say  
Pray for peace, people everywhere!  
listen to what I say  
The Child, the Child, sleeping in the night  
He will bring us goodness and light, He will bring us goodness and light.

### **The Story of the Nativity, according to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (the Paper Bag Pageant!)**

#### **\*Hymn          Away in a Manger**

Away in a manger,  
no crib for His bed,  
The little Lord Jesus  
laid down His sweet head;  
The stars in the heavens  
looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus  
asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing,  
the poor Baby wakes,  
But little Lord Jesus,  
no crying He makes.  
I love Thee, Lord Jesus;  
look down from the sky  
And stay by my cradle  
till morning is nigh.

#### **\*Hymn          Go Tell It On the Mountain**

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;  
Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night  
Behold throughout the heavens, there shone a holy light.

*Refrain*

The shepherds feared and trembled when lo! above the earth,

Rang out the angel chorus that hailed the baby's birth.

*Refrain*

Down in a lowly manger the humble babe was born  
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

*Refrain*

#### **\*Hymn          Angels We Have Heard on High**

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains  
and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why these songs of happy cheer?

What great brightness did you see?

What glad tidings did you hear?

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see

Him whose birth the angels sing:

Come, adore on bended knee,

Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

#### **\*Hymn          We Three Kings**

We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.

O star of wonder, star of light, star, with royal beauty bright,  
Westward leading, still proceeding,  
guide us through this perfect night.

Born a babe on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him  
again, love forever, ceasing never, in our hearts to reign.  
*Refrain.*

**\*Hymn            O Little Town of Bethlehem**

O little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary,  
And gathered all above,  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
Their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars, together  
Proclaim the holy birth.  
Let praises ring: from God they bring  
Goodwill to all on earth.

How silently, how silently  
The wonder is made known,  
When God imparts to human hearts  
The gift that is our own.  
No ear may hear that coming,  
But in this worldly din,  
When souls are truly humble,  
Then the dear babe rests within.

**Closing Words**

**\*Sung Benediction**

As we leave this friendly place,  
Love give light to every face.  
May the kindness which we learn,  
Light our hearts til we return.

**Postlude            Grand Fantasia of "I Saw Three Ships"**  
(David Overton)

*(Please remain seated during the Postlude. You are also invited to come to the front of the church and light a candle silently during this time. We ask the congregation to remain seated in quiet until the last candle is lit.)*

**\*Please stand as you are able.**

*Large Print Hymnals and Assisted Listening Devices are available at the sanctuary doors.*

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*Join us downstairs for good food and conversation immediately following the service!*

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The flowers in church this morning are given by Karen Ancas Santos in remembrance of John & Camella Ancas and Lenny & Josephine Santos

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Greeters: Sue Gleason, Suzanne Nelson

Ushers: Jenny Deenik, Jim Oehler, Kate McNierney, Fran McNierney

Fellowship Hour Hosts: Diane Swift, Diane Blackburn, Diana Hughes

Special thanks to the Pageant-in-a-Paper-Bag Helpers:

Kara Kramer, Kathy Reiff, Melinda Green, Kate McNierney

Special thanks this morning to Paul Funch, flute