

Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church

Where All the People are Ministers of Christ

Our vision is to seek to live and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to nurture persons of all ages and circumstances for faithful discipleship, and to transform faith into service to others.



Photo Credit: Richard Abbott

Reverend Candee Martin

7801 Church Lane, Toano, Virginia 23168

Adult Sunday School begins at 9:15am.

Welcome to our worship service! Mt. Vernon has been worshipping our Lord and serving the Greater Williamsburg Community since 1887. If we can be of any assistance to you, please let us know.

A Service of Lessons and Carols
Christmas Eve Candlelight and Communion Service

December 24, 2023 “Behind Every Great Church 5:00pm
There is Prayer”

Worship Leader Theresa Kaufman

*Please stand as you are able. Please read in Unison in **Bold**.

THE PEOPLE GATHER

Prelude & Meditation Organist, Carol Kendall

Welcome Theresa Kaufman

Centering Words Theresa Kaufman

This is a night of deep joy.
A child is born for us,
a child who brings peace.

Introit “Advent Candle (Light the Candle)”
TFWS#2090(v. 5)

Lighting of Christ Candle Theresa Kaufman

To a people longing for hope and yearning for deliverance, the prophet Isaiah declared, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them, light has shined...For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:2, 6) Tonight, we come seeking hope, peace, joy, and love, and we find these things in a child. God made flesh as a baby in a manger. A baby who is both the beginning and the end of our salvation, who dwells with us even now, our Emmanuel, God with us.

We live as people in the in-between who celebrate the arrival of the Light that shines in lost and broken places as we wait for the day when we will live in the fullness of God’s kin’dom.

We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, our just peace, our fierce joy, the love that transforms us, and Jesus Christ, our wondrous Light. May the Light burning in our hearts guide us, comfort us, protect us, and tend us in all seasons and circumstances, reminding us that day and night, in the light and in the darkness, God is with us. Our salvation has come! **Amen.**

[Light all five candles on the Advent wreath.]

Carol Emmanuel, Emmanuel UMH #204

*Call to Worship (responsive) Theresa Kaufman

Dazzling light on a dark night. Angelic song on a silent night.

Wonderful news! Surprising Good News! The promised Messiah is born!

The Prince of Peace has come. Rejoice!

For on this star-bright, holy night – the angels still sing!

They bid us seek the holy in the midst of the ordinary.

They call us to look into the eyes of a child and see God.

They urge us to sing and dance all the way to Bethlehem.

Rejoice! For on this star-bright, holy night, the angels still sing.

*Carol “Angels We Have Heard on High” UMH #238

The Bidding Prayer Rev. Candee Martin

Beloved in Christ,

this Christmas Eve it is our duty and delight

to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the angels, and to go in heart and mind to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger.

Therefore let us hear again from Holy Scripture

the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our sin

until the glorious redemption brought us by this holy Child;
and let us make this house of prayer glad with our carols of praise.

But first, because this of all things would rejoice Jesus' heart, let us pray to him for the needs of the whole world, and all his people;
for peace upon the earth he came to save;
for love and unity within the one Church he did build;
for goodwill among all peoples.

And particularly at this time let us remember the poor, the cold, the hungry, the oppressed; the sick and them that mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the aged and the little children; and all who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly let us remember all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in this Lord Jesus, we for evermore are one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the words that Christ himself has taught us.

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

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. Amen.

First Lesson

Suzanne Latimer

*God promises Abraham that by his descendants
all the nations of the earth shall obtain blessing.*

Genesis 22:15-18

¹⁵The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶and said, “By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies,¹⁸ and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Carol

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

UMH #211(vs. 1,2,4,7)

Second Lesson

Suzanne Latimer

*The prophet announces the birth of a king
to a people in darkness.*

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. ⁶ For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Responsive Reading

Canticle of Light and Darkness

UMH# 205 (Response 3)

Response 3 (sung)

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

**We look for light but find darkness,
for brightness, but walk in gloom.
We grope like those who have no eyes;
we stumble at noon as in the twilight.**

Response 3 (sung)

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

**If I say, “Let only darkness cover me,
and the light about me be night,”
even the darkness is not dark to you,
the night is as bright as the day,
the darkness is as light with you.**

Response 3 (sung)

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

**Blessed be your name, O God, for ever.
You reveal deep and mysterious things;
you are light and in you is no darkness.
Our darkness is passing away
and already the true light is shining.**

Response 3 (sung)

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.

Third Lesson

Fran Delo

*The king is coming and will usher in
a reign of justice for the poor and peace
for all of God’s creation.*

Micah 5:2-5a

²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. ³Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. ⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of

the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; ⁵ and he shall be the one of peace.

Carol "O Little Town of Bethlehem" UMH# 230

Fourth Lesson Fran Delo

The angel Gabriel announces to the virgin Mary that she will give birth to God's promised Son whose kingdom shall never end.

Luke 1:26-35, 38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God... ³⁸ Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Carol "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" UMH# 216 (v.1, 2)

Fifth Lesson

Theresa Kaufman

Against a backdrop of emperors and taxes, Jesus is born.

Luke 2:1-7

²In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered.⁴ 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. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ 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 for them in the inn.

Carol

What Child Is This?

UMH# 219 (vs. 1,2)

Sixth Lesson

Theresa Kaufman

*The shepherds go to see the Savior of the world,
lying in a manger.*

Luke 2:8-16

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ 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: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” ¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

Carol “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks”

UMH# 236 (verses 1,2,3,4)

Seventh Lesson

Jeanne Fulks

*The wise men follow a star to find the child Jesus,
the King of the Jews.*

Matthew 2:1-11

²In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ² asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” ³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

⁵ They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ⁶ ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’” ⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸ Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” ⁹ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was.

¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Carol

The First Noel

UMH# 245 (vs. 3,4,5)

John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

John 1:1-14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Carol O Come, All Ye Faithful UMH# 234 (vs. 1,2,3,4)

Invitation to Holy Communion

Rev. Candee Martin

Welcome to this sacred place we call sanctuary and to the table of Jesus Christ. In the United Methodist tradition, we believe in an open communion where all are welcome. We place our trust in the unconditional love of God and the unlimited welcome of Jesus Christ.

Prayer of Confession (unison)

Rev. Candee Martin

**When the shadows of sin and sorrow surround us,
shine on us with the light of your comfort
and your grace.**

**When the despair of the world overwhelms us,
lift us with your promise of hope.
When we forget the good news of your presence,
cry out with your message of love,
that we might hear and remember anew.
Christ is born.
Christ is with us.
We are not alone.
In your beloved name, we pray. Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Rev. Candee Martin

We are not alone.

We who were walking in darkness
have seen a great light.

Light has dawned, and the grace of God has appeared,
bringing salvation to us, salvation to all.

Thanks be to God.

The Great Thanksgiving for Christmas Eve

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, 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:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

**Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

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.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

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 God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Breaking the Bread

Giving the Bread and the Cup

Prayer After Receiving (unison)

Rev. Candee Martin

We are filled with joy;

for we have heard good news of great joy.

We are filled with love;

for we have tasted the sign of God's great love.

We are filled with hope

for the angels still sing in our world

and there is a Light for us to follow. Amen.

Thanksgiving for the Light (responsive)

Rev. Candee Martin

We praise and thank you, O God,
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,
through whom you have enlightened us
by revealing the light that never fades.

He is the Word made flesh,

the bright and morning star,

the light of the world.

Through him, and with Mary and Joseph,
with the shepherds and the angels,
and with the saints of every time and place,
we offer praise and honor to you
in the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Sharing the Light of Christ

*Carol

Silent Night, Holy Night

UMH #239

*Christmas Prayer (unison)

**O God of grace, we ask, as we hold our candles,
that you grant the real Christmas experience
of turning on the light of Christ within each of us.**

**Instill within us the knowledge
that his incoming makes the difference
between a darkened inn and a glorified stable;
that Christ taken in and then given out
makes it a genuine Christmas for us and for others;
for “may Christ be born in our hearts”
that the light might be passed on.**

**O Christ, open our eyes and challenge us to let
our light shine outside our own little circle
and give joy where it is needed most;
to the joyless, the lonely, the forgotten. Amen.**

*Blessing

Rev. Candee Martin

Let the bells ring and all the stars sing,
for on this holy night,
the window to heaven is open.

We have seen the glory of the Lord,
revealed in the face of the Christ child.

Tell the world.

Treasure the story.

Ponder it in your heart.

A child has been born

for you, for me, for all the world.

Rejoice! Always rejoice! **Amen.**

Postlude

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

Hearing Assistance Devices are available in the Narthex

We sincerely hope you have felt the presence of the Lord in our Worship Service this morning.

We appreciate your attendance and support.

*Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church
7801 Church Lane
Toano, VA 23168*

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*Centering Words, Mary Petrina Boyd, *Abingdon Worship Annual 2023* (Abingdon Press, 2022)

*Call to Worship, Sourcebook of Worship Resources, (Communications Resources, Inc., Canton, Ohio, 1994)

*Advent Candlelighting Liturgy; Dr. Lisa Hancock, Director of Worship Arts Ministries, served as an organist and music minister in United Methodist congregations in the Northwest Texas and North Texas Annual Conferences, as well as the New Day Amani/Upendo house churches in Dallas. After receiving her Master of Sacred Music and Master of Theological Studies from Perkins School of Theology, Lisa earned her PhD in Religious Studies from Southern Methodist University wherein she researched and wrote on the doctrine of Christ, disability, and atonement.

*Prayer of Confession, Words of Assurance, Mary Scifres, *The Abingdon Worship Annual 2021* (Abingdon Press, 2020)

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*Thanksgiving for the Light, Christmas Prayer, Blessing, Unknown.

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Announcements/Missions

- **Office Closure:** The office will be closed Monday, December 25th and Tuesday, December 26th in observance of Christmas.
- **Sunday School:** There will be no Sunday school Sunday, December 31st, it will resume January 7th.
- **Fellowship Time:** The 3rd Sunday of every month there will be a Fellowship Time after the Sunday Service.
- **Cereal...Cereal...Cereal:** We will concentrate on collecting ONLY cereal donations to St. Olaf's & PGO Food Pantries, so please consider picking up an extra box or two of cereal each week and deposit it in the basket in the narthex. It's a need that we can help to fulfill. Thanks!
- **The Cemetery Association:** Those who would be so moved can contribute to the fund for the "Cemetery Fence Replacement." The Cemetery association is a 501-(C)3 fund.
- **Bridge Group:** There will be **NO** Bridge on, Tuesday, December 26th in observance of Christmas.