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Welcome to First Presbyterian Church of Ocala
on this Christmas Eve
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“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

John 1:5

The Rev. Dr. D. Ronald Watson, Jr., Pastor
The Rev. Natasha L. Sudderth, Associate Pastor
The Rev. Ruth Elswood, Parish Associate
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CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Prelude

Opening Sentences

Leader: The Spirit and the church cry out:

People: Come, Lord Jesus.

Leader: All those who await his appearance pray:

People: Come, Lord Jesus.

Leader: The whole creation pleads:

People: Come, Lord Jesus.

Opening Prayer

The Rev. Dr. Ron Watson

Scripture Reading

Genesis 1:1-2

Wendie Moore

Narrator

The Rev. Dr. Ron Watson

Scripture

Psalm 22:1-2

Wendie Moore

Carol

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan, Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow, In the bleak midwinter, long ago.
Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain; Heaven and earth shall flee away when He
comes to reign. In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Narrator

The Rev. Dr. Ron Watson

Scripture Reading

Luke 2:1-6

Wendie Moore

Special Music

“Breath of Heaven; Mary’s Song”

Natasha Sudderth

Amy Grant and Chris Eaton

Soloist

I have travelled many moonless nights, cold and weary, with a babe inside. And I wonder what
I've done Holy Father, you have come and chosen me now to carry your son. I am waiting in a
silent prayer I am frightened by the load I bear. In a world as cold as stone, must I walk this path
alone? Be with me now, be with me now. Do you wonder, as you watch my face, if a wiser one
should have had my place. But I offer all I am for the mercy of your plan. Help me be strong.
Help me be. Help me.

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Roxanne Schwaller

Offering

+Carol of Light

“Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light”
(entrance of the light of Christ, lighting of the tree)

#130
ERMUNTRE DICH

Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

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

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

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

Prayer after Communion

Service of Lights - Spreading the Light of Christ

+Carol

“Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”

ES IST EIN' ROS'

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming From tender stem hath sprung,
Of Jesse's lineage coming, By faithful prophets sung.

It came a flower bright, Amid the cold of winter,
When half-gone was the night.

This Flower whose fragrance tender With sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor The darkness everywhere.

True man yet very God From sin and death He saves us,
And lightens every load.

The Lighting Of The Candles

The ushers will light the first candle on each row.

+Carol

“Silent Night, Holy Night”

#122
STILLE NACHT

+Carol

“Joy to the World”
(Raise your candle)

#266
RICHMOND

+Benediction

Welcome to all who join us on this sacred night. To our visitors, we add a special word of welcome, along with the hope that this service will communicate to you the love and wonder of Christmas. We invite you to join us for worship on Sunday mornings at 8:15, 9:30 and 11:00.

Please leave your candles in the pews at the conclusion of the service. But please remember to take the light of Christ with you to **illumine the path wherever you go.**

Thank you, and Merry Christmas!

+Postlude

+If able, please stand

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

This Advent and Christmas hymn expresses and acknowledges a particular tension we ought to be aware of during the Christmas season. Just as, in the prophecies from Isaiah, a “rose,” or stem, shoots up from the stump, so too do we celebrate Christ’s birth in the knowledge that He brings life out of death. Our celebrations of Christmas must always point us to Easter. We celebrate Christ’s life because His death brings us a new kind of life. So too, the season of Advent points us not only to Christmas, but to the second coming of Christ, when He will finally make all things new. This is a beautiful and peaceful hymn, but there is just a touch of melancholy in the tune. Even in the arrangement the composer was able to convey the tension amidst our celebration, the sorrow that must lie within our rejoicing, if only for a moment. We know what is coming that week before Easter morning, and this should give us reason to pause. But we also know that the tiny babe whose birth we celebrate, our “Rose,” came to “dispel...the darkness everywhere.” Thus, even amid the tension of life out of death, we celebrate the ultimate life we are promised in Christ.

www.hymnary.org

Silent Night, Holy Night

In the small, quiet town of Oberndorf, Austria, on a snowy Christmas Eve, a priest and an organist wrote what is now the most beloved Christmas carol world-wide. Stories abound as to the exact circumstances of the hymn’s origin, and there are societies dedicated to the task of protecting the authentic hymn text and story. If you ever visit Bronner’s Christmas Wonderland in Frankenmuth, Michigan, you can visit a replica of the Silent Night Chapel. Movies and operas revolve around the hymn, and almost every recording artist that has ever made a Christmas album has recorded it. In a sense, this spreading of the Word is a joy. But these honors should also make us wary. Paul Westermeyer writes, “Partly because of its popularity, STILLE NACHT can easily point to itself rather than beyond itself to the Word” (*Let the People Sing*, 153). It is important, then, to not simply listen to what we might consider a quaint, nostalgia-evoking carol, but to sing out the depth of these words. For the “dawn of redeeming grace” is something far greater and grander than any song we could ever write.

www.hymnary.org

Joy to the World

In Genesis 3, one of the great tragedies in all of Scripture occurs. Adam and Eve sin against God, and are banished from the garden as God puts a curse upon the ground. It is a heartbreaking rupture in God’s perfect creation, and it is hard not to read this text without feeling a twinge of despair. And yet, before the curse comes a promise. God declares that the woman shall bear offspring that will crush the head of the serpent. Jesus, the Son of Man and Son of God, will come to break the curse, to renew the creation, to make whole what is now broken. In Psalm 98, all of creation is called upon to make a joyful noise before God, for the Lord has come to “judge the earth,” and restore (God’s) Creation. We should not fail to see our own hand at work in the destruction of creation, in our sins of waste and decadence. This “judgment of the earth” is, in some part, a judgment of us as caretakers. But God is merciful and full of grace, and rather than leave everything in our hands, (God) gives us the Life-giver. In this beautiful hymn, Isaac Watts makes the connection between the coming of Christ into this world and the beginning of that restoration. Christ brings “joy to the world,” a light where there is darkness, growth where there is decay. And we, along with all Creation, respond with a song of praise.

www.hymnary.org

Leading in worship this evening: Pastors; The Rev. Dr. Ron Watson, The Rev. Natasha Sudderth, Readers; Wendie Moore, Acolyte; Zane Waldren, Music; Kosimo Morishita, David Bedenbaugh, Servers; Mary Carstenn, Lannie Mercer, Nancy Livesay, Rusty Juergens, Cathy Hancock, Jimmy Butscher, Larry Sprowles, Elaine Sprowles and Roxanne Schwaller, FPC youth.