

# The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

December 24, 2023

5PM



**St. Gregory the Great Episcopal Church**

[www.stgregoryathens.org](http://www.stgregoryathens.org) | 706.546.7553 | [office@stgregoryathens.org](mailto:office@stgregoryathens.org)

3195 Barnett Shoals Road, Athens, GA 30605



**VISION STATEMENT FOR  
ST. GREGORY THE GREAT EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

*The vision of St. Gregory the Great is to be a program-sized, culturally integrated parish,  
proclaiming and loving like Jesus with varied worship, music, and outdoor spaces.*

**DIOCESE OF ATLANTA STATEMENT OF PURPOSE  
Adopted at Annual Council 2015**

*We challenge ourselves and the world to love like Jesus as we:  
Worship Joyfully; Serve Compassionately, and Grow Spiritually.*

Dear Visitor,

Thank you for joining us today in the joyous celebration of the birth of the Christ!

If you are visiting in the area or already have a spiritual home, we send you back to your own congregation with our greetings and our blessings. Please sign our guestbook or fill out a pew card.

If you are looking for a place to know and celebrate God's love for all God's children, we invite you to return tomorrow, Christmas Day, for Holy Eucharist at 10AM and on regular Sundays at 8AM or 10:30AM to worship with us and meet other members of St. Gregory's family. Our 10:30AM services are also live streamed. We are an inclusive community welcoming without barriers all who come to us. In addition to our regular worship services, we celebrate our life in God through study, fellowship, prayer and service to one another and the wider community. We would be delighted for you to consider becoming a member of our parish.

For further information about St. Gregory the Great Episcopal Church, please call the church office at (706) 546-7553 or visit our website at [www.stgregoryathens.org](http://www.stgregoryathens.org). **A blessed and merry Christmas to you!**

***Christmas Eve***

***Sunday, December 24***

**9:30PM** Music Prelude \*

**10PM** Festival Eucharist & Choir \*

Reception

***Christmas Day***

***Monday, December 25***

**10AM** Holy Eucharist & Carols \*

***Sunday, December 31***

**8AM** Holy Eucharist

**10:30AM** Holy Eucharist \*

*(no Sunday school; nursery opens at 10AM)*

\* also live streamed

# THE HOLY EUCHARIST

## The Word of God

### Instrumental Prelude

*What Child Is This?*

arr. Dorothy Wells

### OPENING SENTENCE

Behold, I bring you good news of great joy for all the people: for to you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord.

### Processional Hymn 83

*O come, all ye faithful*

ADESTE FIDELES

### BLESSING OF THE CRECHE

God our Father, on this night your Son Jesus Christ was born of Mary, for us and for our salvation. By being born as one of us and lying humbly in a manger, he shows us how much you love the world. Now bless this manger, which we have prepared to celebrate this holy birth; may all who see it be strengthened in faith and receive the fullness of life he came to bring, who is alive and reigns for ever. **Amen**

### OPENING ACCLAMATION

*Celebrant:* Alleluia! Unto us a child is born.

*People:* **O come let us adore him. Alleluia!**

### Song of Praise 107

*Good Christian friends, rejoice*

IN DULCI JUBILO

### THE COLLECT FOR CHRISTMAS

*Celebrant:* The Lord be with you.

*People:* **And also with you.**

*Celebrant:* Let us pray.

O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen.**

### The Children's Christmas Pageant:

#### *Godly Play: A Children's Liturgy for Christmas Eve*

(By Jerome Berryman, revised by Vanessa Avinger and Kate Avinger 2021)

*The congregation will join the children in singing the verses printed in bold.*

### Trumpet Introit

*Shalom Chaverim*

This night is like no other night. It is a time to sing and imagine our way to Bethlehem, on the night Jesus was born. The children will show us the way.

The little town of Bethlehem rests in the hills about 10 miles south of Jerusalem. The name Bethlehem means "House of Bread" which suggests a cozy community. In the center of the town is a small inn. On this night it is overflowing with people seeking sleep and a place to eat. Behind the inn is a dark stable. A spotted cow chews her hay while a weary donkey leans and rests after a day's plowing in the valley. A sheep nearby is nearly asleep. All is still and quiet in the little town.

### Hymn 79

*O little town of Bethlehem*

ST. LOUIS

**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.**

As night falls, the last two travelers come slowly up the road. Look! There is a young woman about to be a mother walking with her husband. They are Mary and Joseph of Nazareth! They have walked for 6 days to come to the city where King David was born, so long ago.

They have come, like so many others, because the Roman emperor wants to count all people, so he can take their money as a tax.

But it is late, and Mary is so weary. Where will they sleep? There is no room in the inn. They decide to sleep with the animals.

**Hymn 89 v. 1**

*It came upon the midnight clear*

CAROL

**It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold;  
“Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven’s all gracious King.”  
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.**

Stars brighten slowly in the sky. All creation holds its breath. Suddenly from the stable, comes the cry of a newborn child! Mary gently wraps the baby in a blanket and lays him in the manger that his father has filled with straw.

**Hymn 101**

*Away in a manger*

CRADLE SONG

**Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,  
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

**The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes  
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes  
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky.  
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.**

In the hills outside Bethlehem, shepherds watch over their sheep.

All at once, the dark of night is replaced by light, and in the midst of the light is something even brighter: the faces of angels!

The fearful shepherds then hear music in the sky, and a voice says clearly...

“Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you glad news of a great joy which will be for all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”

Then more angels appear, a whole choir of them, praising God and singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill to all people, everywhere.”

**“Gloria, Gloria, Gloria”  
Gloria, gloria, gloria, glory to God on high!  
Gloria, gloria, gloria, glory to God on high!  
And on earth be peace to the people  
in whom God is well pleased!  
And on earth be peace to the people  
in whom God is well pleased!**

The shepherds run with joy across the fields to Bethlehem to the stable behind the inn. When they see the Holy Family, they creep forward, mystified, to find Nativity itself (that’s Jesus’ birth) in the center of all that love.



**Hymn 109, vs. 1 & 2**

*The first Nowell the angel did say*

THE FIRST NOWELL

**The first Nowell the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
in fields as they lay, keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.**

**They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far,  
and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.**

Camels walk slowly up the road to Bethlehem, carrying three wise ones (they're also called Kings or Magi). They come from the east, far beyond the Arabian Desert, maybe even as far as the Caspian Sea. The wise men have been following the wild star (was it a comet?) wherever it leads to find the newborn king.

**Hymn 128 , vs. 1 & 2**

*We three Kings of Orient are*

THREE KINGS OF ORIENT

**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 night, star with royal beauty bright;  
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.**

**Born a King on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him again,  
King for ever, ceasing never over us all to reign.**

**O Star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright;  
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.**

The kings' journey ends in a new kind of king: one whose power lies in love rather than money or physical strength. They fall to their knees and give him bright gold, sweet-smelling frankincense and healing myrrh, brought so far with so much love.

So now we all come, following the star, to find God-with-us. We come, as people have come all through the ages, to bring our own gifts to this Child, God's gift to us.

We bring our gifts of stars and ourselves to place around the manger. Dear God, please show us the way into the Mystery of Christmas, as we sing, for this is the night to tell the world that Jesus Christ is born.

We have given each of you a star in your program, and there are more stars in this basket, so that you can bring your gift to the newborn king as well.

**Hymn 99**

*Go tell it on the mountain*

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

*Refrain: Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;  
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)**

# PRAYERS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE

## The Prayers of the Young People



We pray for the people of God's whole church.

We pray especially for the people of St. Gregory's Church, for our rector

Mother Nikki, and our deacon Mother Christina.



We pray for our presiding bishop Michael, and for our bishops Rob and Don.



We pray for the United States, and for our President Joe.



We pray for the other countries of the world and their leaders.  
May they all work for peace.



We pray for this city of Athens, and for the people who  
live and work and go to school here.



We pray for the other cities and towns and for the people who live in them.



We pray for the good earth which God has given us.  
May we help to take care of the land, the air  
and the water, and the plants and animals.



We pray for all people who are sick or sad or lonely or afraid.  
May we always remember them and be kind.



We pray for all people who have died. May they have a place with you.  
We thank you for your many blessings.



We pray especially for \_\_\_\_\_.

Lord, hear the prayers of your young people and strengthen all of us to do your will.

Amen



## THE PEACE

*Celebrant:* The peace of Christ be always with you.

*People:* **And also with you.**

*The people greet one another with a sign of God's peace and then are seated.*

# The Holy Communion

Offertory Hymn 87

*Hark! the herald angels sing*

MENDELSSOHN

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING, EUCHARISTIC PRAYER B

BCP 367

*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.*

**It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

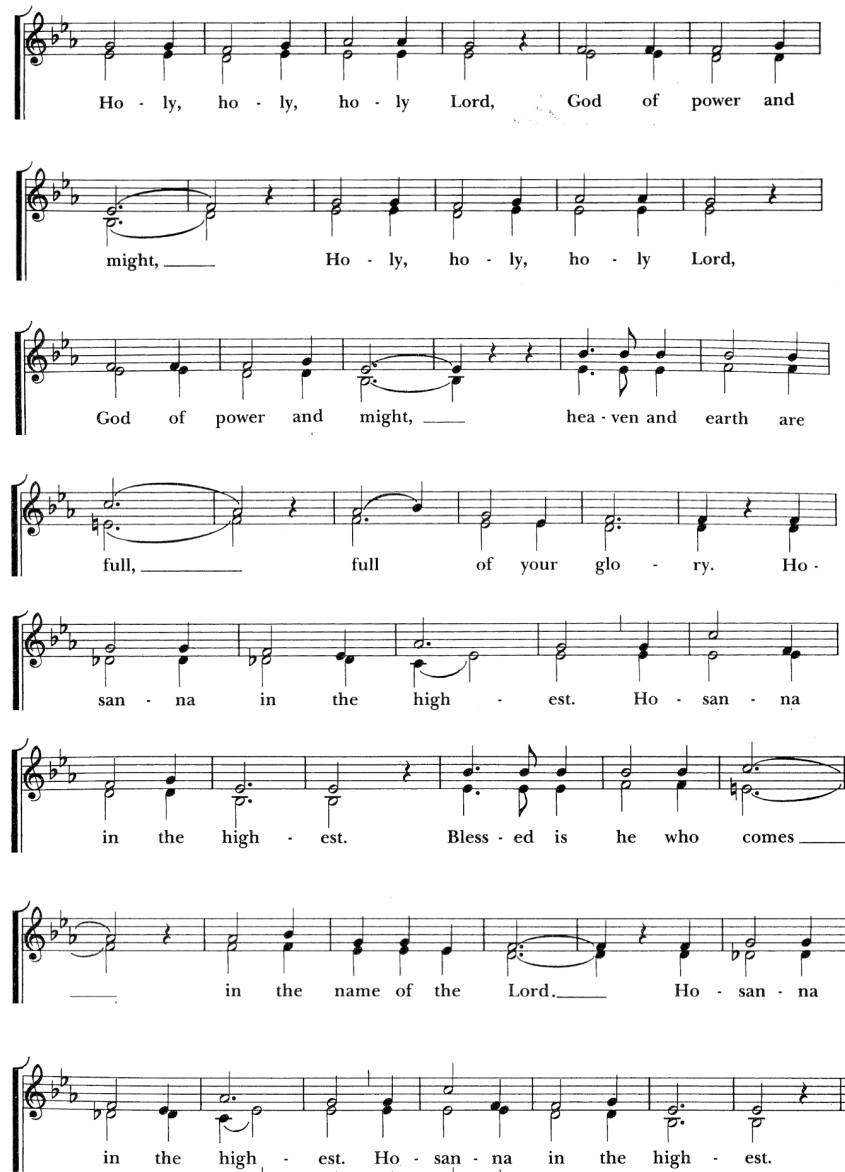
It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Because you gave Jesus Christ, your only Son, to be born for us; who, by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, was made perfect Man of the flesh of the Virgin Mary his mother; so that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin, and receive power to become your children.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Sanctus S-130

*Holy, holy, holy*

Franz Schubert



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of power and  
might, Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord,  
God of power and might, hea - ven and earth are  
full, full of your glo - ry. Ho -  
san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na  
in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes  
in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na  
in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.



We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me." Therefore, according to his command, O Father,

*Celebrant and People: We remember his death,  
We proclaim his resurrection,  
We await his coming in glory;*

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with the Blessed Virgin Mary and all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **Amen.**

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

BCP 364

**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, for ever and ever. Amen.**



Je - sus, Lamb of God: have mer - cy on us.

Je - sus, bear - er of our sins: have mer - cy on us.

Je - sus, re - deem - er, re - deem - er of the world:

give us your peace, give us your peace.

THE COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

Whoever you are and wherever you are in your journey of faith, know that you are welcome to join with us at God's table to share in the holy communion. If you would like to receive a blessing rather than the bread and wine, cross your arms over your chest when the priest comes to you in the communion circle.

Communion Hymn 81  
Communion Hymn 247

*Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming*  
*Lully, lullay*

ES IST EIN ROS  
COVENTRY CAROL

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION PRAYER (for our livestreaming community)

Enriching Our Worship 2

Faithful God, in the wonder of your wisdom and love, you fed your people in the wilderness with the bread of angels, and you sent Jesus to be the bread of life. Though I cannot physically consume these gifts of bread and wine, I thank you that I have received the sacrament of Christ's presence, the forgiveness of sins, and all other benefits of Christ's passion. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may I embody your desire, and be renewed for your service, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

BCP 366

Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Hymn 111

*Silent night, holy night*

STILLE NACHT

**Silent night, holy night,  
all is calm, all is bright round yon virgin mother and child.  
Holy infant, so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace. Sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night,  
Shepherds quake, at the sight  
Glory streams from heaven afar, Heavenly hosts sing Hallelujah.  
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.**

**Silent night, holy night,  
Son of God, love's pure light,  
Radiant beams from thy holy face  
with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord at thy birth, Jesus, Lord at thy birth.**

THE BLESSING

May Almighty God, who sent his son to take our nature upon him, bless you in this holy season, scatter the darkness of sin, and brighten your heart with the light of his holiness. **Amen.**

May God, who sent his angels to proclaim the glad news of the Savior's birth, fill you with joy, and make you heralds of the Gospel. **Amen.**

May God, who in the Word made flesh joined heaven to earth and earth to heaven, give you his peace and favor. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. **Amen.**

Recessional Hymn 100

*Joy to the world!*

ANTIOCH

THE DISMISSAL

*Celebrant:* Let us go forth into the world rejoicing in the power of the Spirit. Alleluia, alleluia!  
*People:* **Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!**

Postlude





**In memory of**

Lief Carter, by Marilyn Vickers  
John Rives, by Diane Barret  
My Mother, Lucille West, by Jenifer Marquardt  
My sister, Carol Whitson, by Lois Alworth  
William & Evelyn Welch, by Shelby & Jeff Welch  
Dwayne & Thelma Coker, by Jeff & Shelby Welch  
Pauline Nicholls, by Pete Nicholls  
Sandra Everett, by the Lamm Family  
Rita Murphy, by the Lamm Family  
Mary Steinbauer, by Paula Sanford  
Denny Sanford, by Paula Sanford  
Terry Kelley, by Sheila Kelley  
Richard MacKinnon, by Sheila Kelley  
Jack & Iris Moorhead, by Sheila Kelley  
Roy & Jackie Kelley, by Sheila Kelley  
David McCranie, by Bernadine McCranie  
Victor & Bernadine Miller, by Bernadine McCranie  
Our son, Peter, by Tim & Christina Dondero  
Kathleen Davis, by Chrissy Moffett  
Ann & Jim Moffett, by Chrissy Moffett  
Elizabeth Hudock, by Chrissy Moffett  
Ann & Charles Davis, by Chrissy Moffett  
Dorothy Klippel, by Judith & David DeJoy  
Catherine DeJoy, by Judith & David DeJoy  
William Junming Yin, by Jonathan Klein  
Eric Agner, by Margaret Agner  
Wellesley Blackburn, by Diane Edison  
Mary Edison, by Diane Edison  
Domine Edison, by Diane Edison  
Susanne Burton, by Jon, Beth, Becca, and Parr Burton

**In thanksgiving for**

My father, Wayne West, by Jenifer Marquardt  
Nathaniel, Jenny, Charlie, & Hayden Welch, by Jeff & Shelby Welch  
Toni & Wes Chapman, by Shelby & Jeff Welch  
Amelia, Caley, Jeffery, and Kitty, by Shelby & Jeff Welch  
The arrival of William Wesley Chapman, IV, by Jeff & Shelby Welch  
My husband, Tim, our daughters, sons-in-law, and grandchildren, by Christina Dondero  
William & Karen Klein, by Jonathan Klein

**In honor of**

Joe Napoli and his music ministry here at St. Gregory's, by Jonathan Klein

## CAST

Karlee Bethune, *Narrator*  
Aiden Lamm, *Narrator*  
Nessa Avinger, *Narrator*  
Kate Avinger  
Jenifer Marquardt  
Jenifer Borg  
Danielle Vogt  
Bernie McCranie  
Anna Hiers  
Jamaica Miller  
Rainsley Vogt

Ethan Vogt  
Moses Holton  
Miriam Holton  
Charlie Ingle  
Carolyn Ingle  
Avonlee Boone  
Lena Rhoads  
Colie Rhoads  
Kitty Ross  
Jeffrey Ross  
Warren Lamm

Charlotte Lamm  
Lillian Schneider  
Felix Bjork  
Simeon Bjork  
Lorraine Bjork  
Julia Sanford  
Frederick  
Isaac  
Reed  
Charles Campbell  
Sadie Bray

**Thanks to the Band of Believers for using their talents to accompany the Christmas Pageant. They are all volunteers who go to St. Gregory's. We really appreciate them sharing their gifts!**

Scarlet Buckley- Tone Chimes, ukulele  
Wynn Burgess-Walter- Tone Chimes, ukulele  
Joe Brutzman- Guitar  
Maggie Reinbergier- harp  
Beth Thornton- violin  
Mark Tavernier- clarinet

Kelly Black- trumpet  
Walker Welch- trumpet  
Porter Welch- French Horn  
Gavin Avinger- French Horn  
Jeb Byers- Trombone  
Vicky Tavernier- director

## SERVERS

Eucharistic Ministers: David Stooksbury & Beth Thornton  
Crucifer: Roger Schwenke  
Ushers: Anna Hiers  
Altar Guild: Barbara Dean, Nancy Watson, Anna Thornton  
Flower Guild: Flower Guild  
Live Stream: Jeff Welch

The Rev. Nikki Mathis, Rector  
The Rev. Christina Dondero, Deacon  
Kendall M. Kookogey, Parish Administrator  
Jonathan Klein, Organist & Director of Music  
Joseph Napoli, Choir Director  
Wade McGlamery, Coordinator of Youth Ministries  
Jude Red Bear, Nursery Director  
Anthony Barkdoll, Live Stream Coordinator  
Terri Tillman, WebMaster/Social Media  
Mark Hein, Buildings & Grounds