

A SIMULTANEOUS SERVICE FROM
WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL
AND
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHRISTMAS CHURCH
IN BETHLEHEM, PALESTINE

DECEMBER 17, 2011
TEN AM IN WASHINGTON, DC
FIVE PM IN BETHLEHEM, PALESTINE

WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

ORGAN VOLUNTARY

Allein Gott in der hoh sei ehr, BWV 663 Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

CHORAL PRELUDE

Christmas carols sung by The Wartburg Choir, Washington

PRELUDE HYMN

"Silent Night" sung by Ajyal "Elderly" Choir, Bethlehem

WELCOME

*The Reverend Dr. Mitri Raheb
The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church
Bethlehem*

The people stand to sing.

OPENING HYMN 83; STANZAS 1-3

O come, all ye faithful

Christmas Church

OPENING GREETING AND ACCLAMATION

*The Right Reverend Mariann Budde
Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Washington
Washington*

The people make the responses in bold.

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed.

All flesh shall see it together.

Beloved, in this Holy Season we gather in Bethlehem and in Washington to celebrate the great gift with which God blesses all Creation in the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us hear and receive the Good News of Christ, and offer to God our thanksgiving in joyful songs of praise.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

O God of all the nations of the earth, we pray for the needs of the whole world, for all who hear the call of God, and all who seek the truth: for peace on the earth and goodwill among nations; for unity within the Church; and for the welfare and prosperity of the people of the Holy Land. **Amen.**

Bring strength to all who live and work in the midst of violence; give comfort to those who are in distress; give hope to the grieving; and above all, make

HYMN 96; STANZAS 1 AND 3*Washington National Cathedral**Angels we have heard on high**Hymns in Washington led by Jessica Lardin**The people are seated.***FIRST LESSON**

Isaiah 9:2-6

*Read in English by
The Reverend Canon Jan Naylor Cope
Vicar, Washington National Cathedral
Washington*

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. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. 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.

*The people stand.***COLLECT**

*Read in English by
Gretchen Theobald
Palestine/Israel Advocacy Group, Washington*

Transforming God, you break the yoke of oppression and turn even instruments of war into fuel for the fire of everlasting peace. Reveal to us the child born among us, that your reign may be known in all the world. In the name of Jesus, Prince of Peace, we pray. **Amen.**

*The people are seated.***SECOND LESSON**

Isaiah 40:1-2, 10-11

Read in Arabic by Dr. Alfred Khoury, Washington

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

*The people stand.***COLLECT**

*Read in English by
Nan Hildebrand
Chaplain, Washington National Cathedral*

Consoling God, who speaks tenderly to all your people; when we are exiled your voice strengthens us, your love sustains us. When we are captive you come as the good shepherd and liberate us. In all our exile and in all our captivity, gather us and lead us. In the name of Jesus, Mighty God, we pray. **Amen.**

HYMN 79; STANZAS 1-2*Christmas Church**O little town of Bethlehem**The people are seated.*

*Read in Arabic by
Mrs. Mai Nasser
Church Elder, Christmas Lutheran Church
Bethlehem*

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

The people stand.

COLLECT

*Read in English by
The Reverend Elizabeth McHan
Communications Assistant, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
Bethlehem*

Creating God, in Mary's yes to your call, the Son of the Most High, Jesus, was conceived. Empower us to embrace the challenges of this life knowing that you will lead us to the possibility of your new creation, more glorious than we could ever ask or imagine. In the name of Jesus, God with us, we pray. **Amen.**

The people are seated.

FOURTH LESSON

Luke 2:1-7

*Read in Arabic by
The Reverend Canon Hosam Naoum
Pastor of the Arabic speaking congregation at St. George Cathedral
Bethlehem*

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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.

The people stand.

COLLECT

*Read in English by the Reverend Dr. Fred Strickert
Pastor, Church of the Redeemer, Jerusalem*

Redeeming God, You came to us as an infant, homeless, helpless and vulnerable yet safe in the loving embrace of Mary. Wrap our world in your arms that we may grow strong to care for the needs of the oppressed, the poor, the destitute, and all who suffer in this world. In the name of Jesus, Desire of Nations, we pray. **Amen.**

The people are seated.

CAROL

*Washington National Cathedral
"When Jordan hushed his waters still" sung by The Wartburg Choir*

FIFTH LESSON

John 1:1-14

*Read in English by
The Reverend Canon John L. Peterson
Canon for Global Justice and Reconciliation, Washington National Cathedral
Washington*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of human will, but of God. And 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.

The people stand.

COLLECT

*Read in English by
Grace Said
Palestine/Israel Advocacy Group, Washington*

Reconciling God, you loved the world so much that you sent your only Son to be born as one of us. Illuminate our humanity that we may find it shining forth in ourselves and others. In the name of Jesus, Dayspring from on high, we pray. **Amen.**

HYMN

"Go tell it on the mountain" sung by Dar al-Kalima School Choir

The people are seated.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

*The Right Reverend Munib Younan
Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
Bethlehem*

The people stand.

PRAYERS

*Mr. Adel Khader, Church Elder, Christmas Lutheran Church, Bethlehem
The people pray the responses in **bold.***

Incarnate God, the Word became flesh and dwells among us. With confidence in the power of that miracle, we offer our prayers on behalf of the Church and the world praying, Come now, O God of love.
Reconcile your people and make us one body.

That the child born to all humanity may awaken us to heal this broken and hurting world, and the peace proclaimed by angels in the shepherds' field may be realized in every place of war and on every violent street, we pray to you, O God. Come now, O God of love.
Reconcile your people and make us one body.

That as you entered this world in the poverty of a cave, you would instill in us the courage to dismantle the barriers that separate rich from poor, so that we may build together the just world you intended, we pray to you, O God. Come now, O God of love.

Reconcile your people and make us one body.

*The Reverend Susan P. Wilder and Matthew Welch
Washington*

That the consolation of the incarnate Lord may bring wholeness and healing to all who are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity and that our lives may be offerings of hope to our neighbors, we pray to you, O God. Come now, O God of love.

Reconcile your people and make us one body.

That the blessed hope we celebrate this day may be the fulfillment of all who have gone before us, knitting your people into shared life for all eternity, we pray to you, O God. Come now, O God of love.

Reconcile your people and make us one body.

Light of life, you came in flesh, born into human pain and joy. Grant us faith, O Christ, to see your presence among us. Fill us with your light, that as we walk in the way of peace, we may join our voices with heaven and earth in singing songs of gladness. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. **Amen.**

HYMN 100; STANZAS 1-2, 4

Washington National Cathedral

Joy to the world

PRAYER

*The Reverend Richard Graham
Bishop of the Metropolitan Washington, DC, Synod of the ELCA
Washington*

Almighty God, Creator of our diverse human family: you fashion us in your image and command us to love one another. Stretch out your arm that the wall shall come down in Bethlehem, the birthplace of your Son, the Prince of Peace. May the crumbling wall herald the end of all barriers which divide us and may we be bound together in that love that gives rise to harmony among all people. All this we ask with expectant hearts through Christ Jesus, our Lord. **Amen.**

INVITING THE OFFERING

An offering will be collected as worshipers exit. All donations are to support Bright Stars of Bethlehem which serves the International Center of Bethlehem in its ministries of health, education, the arts, and social services. Donations may be made in cash or by check made payable to "Bright Stars of Bethlehem."

BLESSING IN ENGLISH

*Bishop Graham
Washington*

BLESSING IN ARABIC

*The Right Reverend Suheil Dawani
Episcopal Bishop of Jerusalem
Bethlehem*

HYMN 87

Christmas Church

Hark! The herald angels sing

DISMISSAL

*Canon Cope
Washington*

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

ORGAN VOLUNTARY

In dulci jubilo, BWV 729

J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

ABOUT THE SERVICE

In 2006 a group gathered in concern for the deteriorating situation in Palestine and Israel. It was a few months before Christmas, and thoughts turned to Bethlehem and the present-day wall around the city. What if the Christmas events took place today? Would Mary and Joseph be able to cross into Bethlehem on their journey from Nazareth? The 30-foot wall that separates Bethlehem from Jerusalem would block the way. Perhaps Mary would give birth while waiting to cross through a checkpoint, as happens for some Palestinian women today on their way to the hospital. Recognizing that most Americans do not know about the realities of Palestinian life, the Ad Hoc Committee for Bethlehem was formed to raise awareness.

This committee then sponsored events to lift up the need for justice and peace in Bethlehem and throughout the land, and to remind the faithful of the calling to be peacemakers. This service is an outcome of their work.

Today, six years later, a concrete wall remains, separating Bethlehem from neighboring Jerusalem, five miles away. Residents find themselves cut off from relatives, unable to worship at religious sites in Jerusalem, and limited in their opportunities for higher education and employment.

The concrete wall not only separates the West Bank from Israel: it cuts through Palestinian land, separating farmers from fields and effectively annexing their land. Israeli roads and settlements in the region further segment Palestinian communities.

Many Palestinians who have the means have left the Holy Land in search of a better life elsewhere. The Christian population of Bethlehem has declined from a majority several decades ago to about fifteen percent today. The presence of Christians throughout the Holy Land has dwindled to less than two percent.

The current situation in Bethlehem is of concern to Christians around the world who seek to follow the Prince of Peace in building bridges that connect rather than walls that divide. Today we turn our hearts to the one God who loves all equally, and pray that a new day will dawn for us, for Palestinians, and for Israelis.

PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND

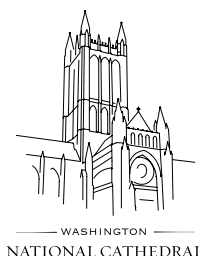
Travel dates: March 17-27, 2012

Register soon

"My faith has long been central to my life, but the Cathedral Pilgrimage made it flower. What was abstract became real. Sit on the wall of Jacob's well where Jesus asked for a drink from a Samaritan woman, and what was ordinary becomes sacred. The mystery becomes a blessing."

Carter Keithley, 2011 Pilgrim

As the focus turns to Bethlehem this season, consider the gift of being there yourself to walk where Jesus walked and taught. For more information call Tiffany Montavon (202) 537-2373.



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