

TRINITY CHURCH

ADVENT 2020 EVENINGS

O Antiphons, 8th century (probably much earlier)

O come, O Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home
Make safe the way that leads on high
and close the path to misery
Rejoice! Rejoice
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel

O come, O Bright and Morning Star
and bring us comfort from afar
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadows put to flight
Rejoice! Rejoice
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel

O come Desire of Nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind
bid all our sad divisions cease
and be thyself our King of peace
Rejoice! Rejoice
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel

Christmas on the Edge, by Malcolm Guite

Christmas sets the centre on the edge;
The edge of town, the outhouse of the inn,
The fringe of empire, far from privilege
And power, on the edge and outer spin
Of turning worlds, a margin of small stars
That edge a galaxy itself light years
From some unguessed at cosmic origin.

Christmas sets the centre at the edge.
And from this day our world is re-aligned
A tiny seed unfolding in the womb
Becomes the source from which we all unfold
And flower into being. We are healed,
The end begins, the tomb becomes a womb,
For now in him all things are re-aligned.

First Coming, by Madeleine l'Engle

He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace.
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine. He did not wait

till hearts were pure. In joy he came
to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
he came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

Scripture: Micah 5:2-4 (Message)

Remembering that it happened once, by Wendel Berry

Remembering that it happened once,
We cannot turn away the thought,
As we go out, cold, to our barns
Toward the long night's end, that we
Ourselves are living in the world
It happened in when it first happened,
That we ourselves, opening a stall
(A latch thrown open countless times
Before), might find them breathing there,
Foreknown: the Child bedded in straw,
The mother kneeling over Him,
The husband standing in belief
He scarcely can believe, in light
That lights them from no source we see,
An April morning's light, the air
Around them joyful as a choir.
We stand with one hand on the door,
Looking into another world
That is this world, the pale daylight
Coming just as before, our chores
To do, the cattle all awake,
Our own frozen breath hanging
In front of us; and we are here
As we have never been before,
Sighted as not before, our place
Holy, although we knew it not.

The Work of Christmas, by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,

*To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.*

Art Meditation: "Attention" by Scott Erickson



Away in a Manger, by Martin Luther (?)

Away in a manger, no crib for a 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 in the hay.

This Little Babe, by Robert Southwell (16th c)

This little babe, so few days old,
Is come to rifle Satan's fold;
All hell doth at his presence quake.
Though he himself for cold do shake,
For in this weak unarmèd wise
The gates of hell he will surprise.

With tears he fights and wins the field;
His naked breast stands for a shield;
His battering shot are babish cries,
His arrows looks of weeping eyes,
His martial ensigns cold and need,
And feeble flesh his warrior's steed.

His camp is pitchèd in a stall,
His bulwark but a broken wall,
The crib his trench, hay stalks his stakes,
Of shepherds he his muster makes;
And thus, as sure his foe to wound,
The angels' trumps alarum sound.

My soul, with Christ join thou in fight;
Stick to the tents that he hath pight;
Within his crib is surest ward,
This little babe will be thy guard.
If thou wilt foil thy foes with joy,
Then flit not from this heavenly boy

The Huron Carol (Jesous Ahathonhia), by Jean de Brebeuf

'Twas in the moon of wintertime
When all the birds had fled
That mighty Gitchi Manitou
Sent angel choirs instead
Before their light the stars grew dim
And wandering hunters heard the hymn
Jesus your King is born, Jesus is born

Within a lodge of broken bark
The tender Babe was found
A ragged robe of rabbit skin
Enwrapp'd His beauty round
And as the hunter braves drew nigh
The angel song rang loud and high
Jesus your King is born, Jesus is born

The earliest moon of wintertime
Is not so round and fair
As was the ring of glory
On the helpless infant there
The chiefs from far before him knelt
With gifts of fur and beaver pelt
Jesus your King is born, Jesus is born

O children of the forest free
O sons of Manitou
The Holy Child of earth and heaven
Is born today for you
Come kneel before the radiant Boy
Who brings you beauty, peace and joy
Jesus your King is born, Jesus is born

Little Lamb, by William Blake (18th c)

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed,
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and he is mild,
He became a little child;
I, a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

The Risk of Birth, by Madeleine L'Engle

This is no time for a child to be born,
With the earth betrayed by war & hate
And a nova lighting the sky to warn
That time runs out & the sun burns late.

That was no time for a child to be born,
In a land in the crushing grip of Rome;
Honour & truth were trampled by scorn--
Yet here did the Savior make his home.

When is the time for love to be born?
The inn is full on the planet earth,
And by greed & pride the sky is torn--
Yet love still takes the risk of birth.

Advent Prayer, by Jan Richardson

I did not seek this birthing,
but you have drawn me into the passage;
and I am the one who is bearing,
and I am the one being born.

So in my longing yearning breaking
gaspng groaning laboring
bearing birthing I am asking,
O God my midwife, deliver me.

In the Bleak Midwinter, by Christina Rossetti (19th c)

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

Closing Music:

In the Virgin's womb He lay
God made flesh, the mortal babe
In her body she has held
That which heaven can not contain.

In the Virgin's womb He lay
Born to die, His flesh a grave
In her arms she has held
He whom death could not hold down.