

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Niskayuna Reformed Church
December 24, 2023

Prelude: O Holy Night

Adams

Deana Perlee, John Burger, soloist

Welcome

Pastors Mike & Sherri

Call To Worship: Psalm 126

One: When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,

All: we were like those who dreamed.

One: Our mouths were filled with laughter,

All: our tongues with songs of joy.

One: Then it was said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”

All: The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

One: Restore our fortunes, LORD, like streams in the Negev.
Those who sow with tears

All: will reap with songs of joy.

One: Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow,

All” will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.

*Hymn of Worship: “Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

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Those who dream...keep awake.

Scripture Reading & Reflection: Isaiah 64:1-9

Lighting The Hope Candle

Dreamers Prayer for Hope (Responsive):

One: God of Hope,
Over and over again in scripture,
we hear your dream for a beautiful world.

**All: We hear your dream for peace and reconciliation.
We hear your dream for harmony and togetherness.
We hear your dream for community and hope.**

One: We hear your dreams, and yet we do not open our eyes.
We continue to live with the curtains drawn,
The covers pulled tight, eyes shut to the realities of the world.

All: Forgive us.

Kindle a hope in us that will burn through the darkest nights.

Give us the strength and the will to keep awake in this sleeping world.

With hope we pray. Amen.

*Hymn of Worship: “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

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Those who dream...prepare.

Scripture Reading & Reflection: Mark 1:1-8

Lighting of The Peace Candle

Dreamers Prayer for Peace (Responsive):

One: God of Peace,
We wish that peace was something we could buy.

**All: We wish that peace could be ordered in a subscription service,
found on a map, downloaded in an app, or voted for in a ballot.**

One: We wish that peace was as easy as a one-time choice
when we are feeling our best.

**All: However, what we have found is that peace
involves everyday decisions over and over,
whether or not we are feeling our best.**

One: So, this night, as we light the candle of peace
we confess that we need your help in this Christmas season.

**All: Prepare the way for greater peace
and teach us how to be a part of it. Amen.**

Anthem: “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent”

Sharon Greene, soloist

Those Who Dream...sow joy.

Scripture Reading and Reflection: Luke 1:46-55

Dreamer’s Prayer for Joy (Responsive):

One: God of Joy,
With a sky full of stars and a world full of flowers,
there should be no end to our joy.

**All: And yet, instead of decorating our lives with joy,
we often let it slip away like loose change.**

One: Instead of singing like Mary, or dancing like David,
We pass by remarkable beauty and love most days, unfazed.

**All: Forgive us.
Teach us the ways of children,**

**who laugh and dance and sing,
as if joy is the very thing that keeps them alive.
Maybe they have joy figured out. Gratefully we pray, amen.**

*Hymn of Worship: “*Joy to The World*” 161

Offertory: The Angel Gabriel

Arr. Fraser

Those who dream...are not alone.

Scripture Reading & Reflection: Luke 1:26-45

Dreamers Prayer for Love (Responsive):

One: God of Love,

You say to me, “You are highly favored,”
but I struggle to see how that could be.

**All: You say to me, “Do not be afraid,” but I am afraid all the time.
You say to me, “Even the impossible is possible,
just look at Elizabeth!”**

One: But hope slips through my hands like water.

The impossible still feels impossible.

So this night I pray,

All: This night we pray:

Teach us to sing like Mary. Teach us to laugh like Elizabeth.

**Teach us to trust like the angels. Forgive us and help us,
when we can only do one at a time, or none at all. Amen.**

*Hymn of Worship: “*Angels We Have Heard On High*”

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Those who dream...witness God.

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-20

Lighting The Christ Candle

Dreamers Prayer for The Coming of Christ (Responsive):

One: Ever-present God, from time to time we dream radical dreams.

**All: We dream of freedom for the imprisoned, food for the hungry,
and equality for all.**

One: We dream bold, radical dreams,

until the world tells us that these dreams are impossible.

All: And when that happens, we are tempted

to tuck our dreams into our coat pockets

and let them collect dust on the shelves of our hearts.

Forgive us for giving up so easily.

One: Forgive us for giving up so easily, for on this night
we remember and celebrate a radical dream – that you dwelled among us.

**All: Give us the courage to dust old dreams off the shelf
with the confidence that with you, the impossible is possible.**

One: With you, a light always shines in the darkness.

**All: With you, even an unwed teenage couple
and a band of shepherds can bring joy to the world.**

One: Thanks be to God for a dream like that.

**All: May we receive your dream for the world this night
and may we step out to live into your dream, as those who dream. Amen.**

Lighting our Candles

*Hymn of Worship: “*Silent Night*”

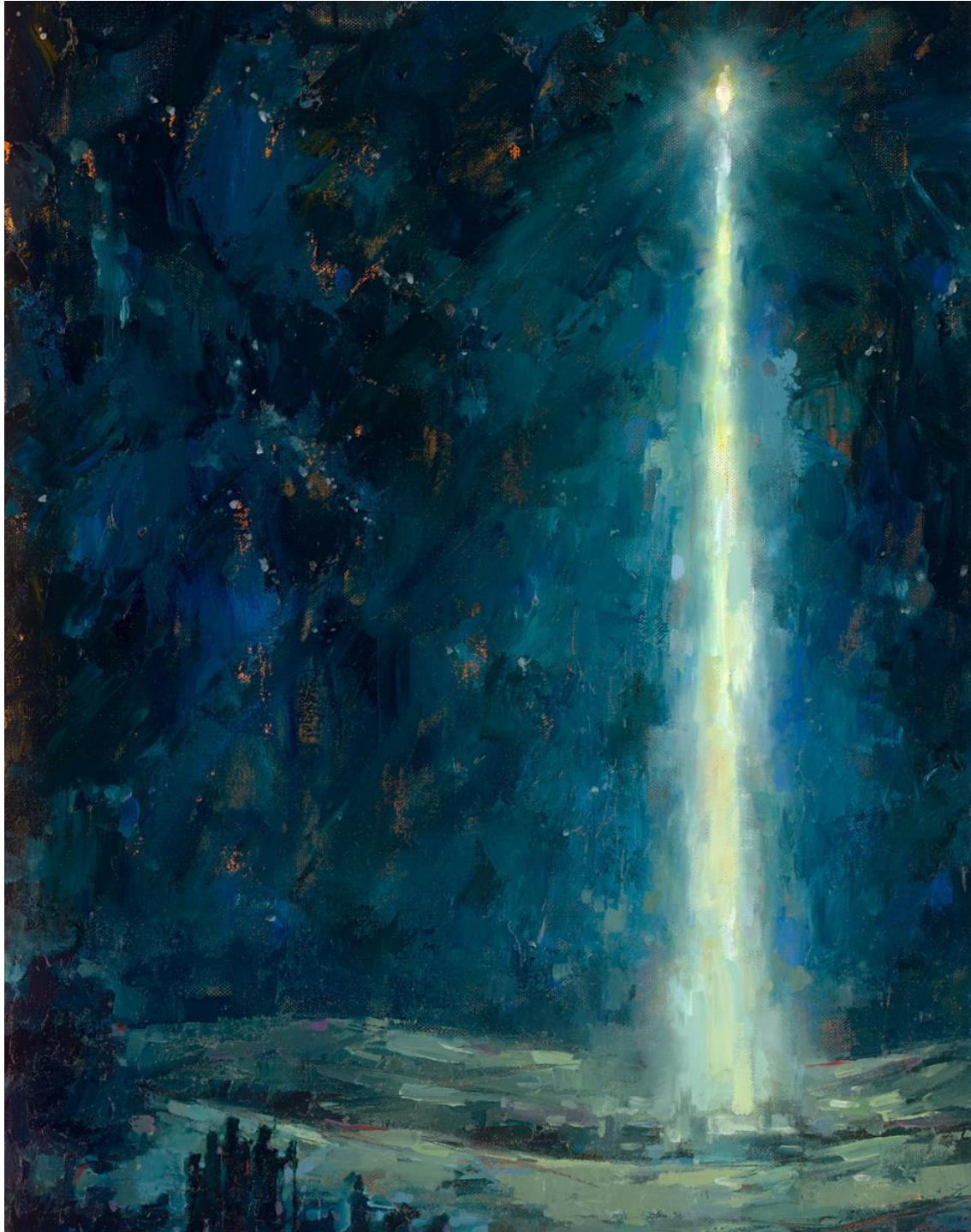
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Benediction

Postlude

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

Bach/Held



Cover art: "*The Star*" by Wendy Keller