

**The People of God gathered for a
Battery-powered Candlelight
Socially Distanced Christmas Eve Communion
(although we are not handing out real bread and wine, of course)**

In compliance with CDC, DOH, OSHA and KJV guidelines, everyone must wear a mask and exhale only when necessary. We are livestreaming the service for those smart enough to stay home, so do not look directly into the camera.

*Be seated in a pew that is marked "Open on Christmas Eve."
The sanctuary will close five minutes after the last note on the organ,
so do not plan on hanging around.*

Prelude for Handbells

We know how you feel about handbells, but wind instruments are super spreaders so we are stuck with handbells.

Lighting of the Advent Candles

Leader: We light the candle of hope because our quarantine is not over.

All: The light of freedom is several months away.

Leader: The light of joy is not so bright this year.

All: The light of love shines for those within our social pod.

Leader: But even now our vaccine is on the way.

All: Next year we will hug.

Opening Hymn, O Come, All Ye Careful

The carols will be played by a masked violinist and sung by a masked singer. Because congregational singing is high on the list of risky behavior, please do not sing along even if you know the words. We know you know the words. Everyone knows the words.

Invocation

O God, like the light that will come from our battery-powered candles, may the light of Christmas come, warming our hearts and brightening our way. May the light just keep going and going and going. Amen.

Litany on Christmas Eve

Leader: We come to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

All: We come as loving, caring and cautious people.

Leader: We come to celebrate hope.

All: We do not have chills, muscle pains or a fever of 100.4 degrees or greater.

Leader: We come to celebrate peace.

All: We do not have a cough, sore throat or shortness of breath.

Leader: We come to celebrate joy.

All: We have not lost our sense of taste or smell.

Leader: We come to celebrate love.

All: We have not have recently traveled internationally or to any state with a Republican governor. We have not experienced diarrhea or vomiting. We have not gotten a positive result from a COVID-19 test that tested saliva or used a nose or throat swab in the past 14 days.

Leader: We come to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior.

All: We agree to wear a mask that covers our noses and mouths. We agree to maintain six feet distance from other persons (not in our party). We agree that if we feel the need to cough at any point during worship, we will leave immediately and self-quarantine until Epiphany.

Leader: May our celebration be prudent, careful and responsible.

Prayer of Confession

May the sanitizer symbolize the forgiveness of sins and the disinfectant wipes the assurance of pardon.

Passing of the Peace

We will not be shaking hands, hugging or bumping elbows. You are encouraged to nod gently to express the safely distanced love you feel for your sisters and brothers.

Offertory

We will not be passing the offering plates, but we really need your money right now, so please use your touchless credit card at the kiosk in the narthex as you leave.

The Story of the Birth of Jesus (revised version)

About that time Emperor Augustus, who was such a bad emperor that his people were only safe when he was playing golf, gave a stupid, dangerous order that everyone had to travel to their hometown. Joseph took his pregnant fiancée Mary for reasons that are incomprehensible to anyone who cares about safety. She had a baby in Bethlehem, but not at the Bethlehem Hospital. If people had washed their hands, kept their distance and worn a mask there would have been a room at the hospital.

Sermon, *Quarantined in a Manger*

The Lord's Supper

On your way into the sanctuary you should have taken an individually wrapped, hermetically sealed styrofoam bread substitute and a tiny plastic shot glass filled with stale grape juice from the basket in the foyer. If you neglected to pick up these symbols of Christ's body and blood, it is too late now.

Closing Carol, *Silent Night, Sterile Night*

As the violinist plays, flip the switch on your candle. We share the Christ-light that will eventually flip this virus-plagued world upside-down.

Benediction

May God bless you with the understanding that Christmas is about more than our traditions. May God bless you with the hope of God coming to share our fears. May God bless you with the joy that cannot be quarantined.

*We are not serving hot chocolate this year,
but pick up a pack of Swiss Miss to take home with you.*