



ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
ESSEX, NY

St. John's Episcopal Church  
Essex, NY

The Very Rev. Diane Nancekivell

# The Feast of the Holy Name

A Celebration of Christmas in Word and  
Music

In-Person & Zoom Worship  
December 31, 2023 □ 10:00 A.M.

Loose Plate Offering  
General Fund

Zoom Link for Sunday Worship:  
<https://www.stjohnsessexny.org/worshipmeet>

Preludes

Hymn

Hark! the herald angels sing

Hymn 87

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The Collect for Holy Name

*Officiant:* Eternal Father, you gave to your incarnate Son the holy name of Jesus to be the sign of our salvation. He was to be called Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Eternal Counsel, and the Prince of Peace. Plant in every heart, we pray, the love of him who is the Savior of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen.**

**First Reading**

*Luke 2:15-21*

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

*Reader:* The Word of the Lord.

*People:* **Thanks be to God.**

**Hymn**

**Angels we have heard on high**

**Hymn 96**

**Second Reading**

*John 1:1-5; 14-18*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with 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. 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. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

*Reader:* The Word of the Lord.

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People:

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**Thanks be to God.**

**Hymn**

**Unto us a child is born**

**Hymn 98 1-3**

**Third Reading**      *“Everything Past and Everything Future”* from *The Mystery of Holy Night*

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

As if to shame  
The mightiest human efforts and achievements,  
a child is placed at the center of history.  
A child, born of humans: a son, given by God.  
That is the mystery of the world’s redemption.  
Everything past and everything future is encompassed here.  
The infinite mercy of Almighty God comes to us,  
condescends to us in the form of a child, his son.  
That this child has been born for us,  
that this son has been given, that this human child, this son of God,  
belongs to me;  
that I know him, have him, love him, that I am his and he is mine—  
my very life now depends entirely on all these things.  
A child has our life in his hand.

**Hymn**

**Go Tell it on the Mountain**

**Hymn 99**

**Fourth Reading**      *The Road to Daybreak* by Father Henri Nouwen

Somehow I realized that songs, music, good feelings, glorious liturgies,  
nice presents, big dinners, and many sweet words do not make Christmas.  
Christmas is saying ‘yes’ to something beyond all emchristmas is saying ‘yes’  
to a hope based on God’s initiative which has nothing to do with what I  
think or feel. Christmhild is born who is called the Light of the World, the  
Prince of Peace.

**Hymn**

**Once in Royal David’s City**

**Hymn 102 1-**

**3**

**Fifth Reading**      from Lancelot Andrewes’s sermon preached on  
Christmas Day, 1622

To look a little on it, [the coming of the Magi]: First, the distance of the  
place they came from. It was not hard by as the shepherds but a step to  
Bethlehem over the fields: this was riding many a hundred miles, and cost

them many a day's journey. Secondly, we consider the way that they came, if it be pleasant, or plain and easy; for if it be, it is so much the better. This was nothing pleasant, for through deserts, all the way waste and desolate, over the rocks and crags of both Arabias, Yet if safe but it was not, but exceeding dangerous, as lying through the midst of the black tents of Kedar, a nation of thieves and cut-throats; to pass over the hills of robbers, infamous then, and infamous to this day. No passing without great troop or convoy. Last we consider the time of their coming, the season of the year. It was no summer progress. A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off.

*Officiant:* Let us pray. **Lord: Let us place wreaths on the doors of our own hearts, so that the Holy Spirit may find these doors, enter in, and take up lodging there, and by that presence, make us holy. We ask that the entrance of the Holy Spirit create an island of calm and gentleness within us. Amen.**

Hymn "T"was in the moon of winter-time

Hymn 114

### The Prayers

Holy One, you gave us the gift of life, you put us in a stunning world, and you made us free to choose. In Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, you gave us new life and new hope for knowing you. May that Light shine through our choices, our words, our acts, so that others will praise you, source of Light and Love. **Amen.**

O thou sudden God,  
generous in mercy  
quickeners of new life  
giver of new love  
irreverent, subversive,  
deep source of yearning  
startling comforter  
bearer of darkness  
unmaker of old paths  
bringer of strange joy  
abundant, disturbing,  
healing unlooked for  
tender and piercing:  
late have I loved thee  
O beauty so ancient and so new

### The Lord's Prayer

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,  
**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.**

Hymn  
115

What child is this (vs. 1, 2)

Hymn

**The Sixth Reading**

*Journey of the Magi, 1927, T.S. Eliot*

‘A cold coming we had of it,  
Just the worst time of the year  
For a journey, and such a long journey:  
The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
The very dead of winter.’  
And the camels galled, sorefooted, refractory,  
Lying down in the melting snow.  
There were times we regretted  
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.  
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling  
and running away, and wanting their liquor and women,  
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:  
A hard time we had of it.  
At the end we preferred to travel all night,  
Sleeping in snatches,  
With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;  
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,

And three trees on the low sky,  
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.  
But there was no information, and so we continued  
And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon  
Finding the place; it was (you might say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
And I would do it again, but set down  
This set down  
This: were we led all that way for  
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly  
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.  
I should be glad of another death.

## **Offertory**

**Offertory Hymn**

**We three kings**

**Hymn 128**

**Final Prayer**

Howard Thurman (adapted)

**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 the flocks,  
then the work of Christmas begins:  
to find the lost,  
to heal those broken in spirit,  
to feed the hungry,  
to release the oppressed,  
to rebuild the nations,  
to bring peace among all peoples,  
to make a little music with the heart.  
And to radiate the Light of Christ,  
every day, in every way, in all that we do and in all that we say.  
Then the work of Christmas begins. *Amen.***

**Blessing**

**Blessing**

May Christ, who by his incarnation, gathered into one all things earthly and heavenly, fill you with joy and peace. May the Prince of Peace give you his peace, this day and always. May the blessing of God, who created you, Jesus who was born for you, and Holy Spirit who broods over you and the world, be with you and remain with you for ever.

**Hymn**

**Joy to the World**

**Hymn 100**

**The Dismissal**

*Celebrant:* Let us go forth into the world rejoicing in the power of Emmanuel.

*People:* **Thanks be to God.**

**Postlude**

*Please join us for fellowship in Persell Hall following the service*

**Ministers of the Service**

Usher/Greeter: Mo Ecclesine & Linda Rockefeller

Altar Guild: Bobbi Perez and/or Anne Zilch

Altar Flowers: Bobbi Perez

Lector: Daphne Hallowell

Intercessor: Carole Harsh

Crucifer: Edward O'Neill

Lay Eucharistic Minister: Darcey Hale

Zoom Host: Carole Harsh

Coffee Hour Hosts: O'Neill Family

