



*A Light in the
Darkness*

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

A CONCERT FOR THE CELEBRATION OF
ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

7:00 PM FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2024

Humanity has been grappling with the concept of peace since the dawn of history. When we think of peace today, certain ideas tend to come to mind: A setting uncluttered by noise, a region free of violence, or perhaps a home where family members stop their bickering. These images are striking in that they emphasize something that isn't there: conflict, war, tension, sounds, commotion. But peace is more than a lack of something. It is also a greeting: Peace be with you; and a benediction: Go now in peace; and a gift: Peace I leave with you. What if peace is not an absence, but a presence? May tonight's concert confirm in us the conviction to be agents of peace in our lives and the world.

See Amid the Winter's Snow

John Goss/arr. Dan Forrest

Alleluia.

See, amid the winter's snow,
born for us on earth below,
see the tender Lamb appears,
promised from eternal years.

*Hail! Thou ever-blessed morn!
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."
Alleluia.*

Lo, within a manger lies
He who built the lofty skies;
He, who throned in light sublime,
sits amid the cherubim!

Hail! Thou ever-blessed morn....

Sacred Infant, all divine,
what a tender love was Thine;
Thus, to come from highest bliss,
down to such a world as this.

*Hail! Thou ever-blessed morn...
Alleluia.*

Give me the Word

Larua Merzig Fabrycky

Lord, you have given me no words,
and even on the eve of
the arrival of all hope,
I am without words.
Please -
don't leave me empty
tonight.
I scan the horizon
for a star, and ask you to guide me,
in the meantime, in the dark.
I watch,
again,
expecting you still.
Give me the Word,
If not the words.

I Saw Three Ships

English Carol, arr. Philip Keveren

Suddenly the House Went Dark

Jeanne Murray Walker

And though we flipped all the switches, tested breakers in the basement, phoned and phoned, nothing. When the big boys turn off your power, it's gone. Our house was dark then, as the inside of a shut refrigerator. Our red walls purpling until they seemed to emit cries like a ringing telephone. Now we stumble around the house in the frigid black, feeling our way from room to room, marveling that we recognize so little. No keyboard works except the piano. But music? — is over and done with. I rummage for paper and pencil, thinking I will scribble this poem the old way, trying to remember how. Around me, rooms from my past houses switch places with one another. I meet my old self walking down the hall. Our yard has blinked out, gone now from all our windows. What if the whole city goes black? What if dark extinguishes the sun? What if God pulls some big plug for good? What will we believe in? In what dark house will we live?

Recitative

Comfort Ye (*Messiah*)

G.F. Handel

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and
cry unto her, that her warfare is
accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.
The voice of him that crieth in the
wilderness; prepare ye the way of the
Lord; make straight in the desert a
highway for our God. (*Isaiah 40: 1-3*)

Aria

Every Valley (*Messiah*)

G.F. Handel

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry
mountain and hill made low; the crooked
straight and the rough places plain. (*Isaiah 40:4*)

Murmuration

Jeffrey Munroe

On a sullen December afternoon
I turn a corner into a Hitchcock movie. Five hundred starlings staring at me
not a murder of crows
But—I fear for a moment—a homicide of starlings yet they part before me
like I'm Moses or at least Charlton Heston
I've come in peace, they let me pass
I move ahead after a pause
Then look back and see them coalesce again into one black mass pulsing—
having the same mind
That unfurls like a flag or waves like a wave whipping and wilting
Skittish skydancers who treat the earth like a trampoline
I'm not sure of the physics or metaphysics
But in that moment I see clearly
They survive because they have each other.

The Coventry Carol

English Carol/arr. Keveren

When Hannah Spoke with God

Margaret Mackinnon

after an image in the Paris Psalter, ca. tenth century

Years later, what Hannah remembered most wasn't that morning she took
young Samuel to the temple, nor the many trips she made to visit him,
carrying, always, *those little robes* she sewed. Instead, another day—
watching herself as if from far away: a childless woman, then, at Shiloh,
walking alone amid the offerings and the arch. Hannah's lips moved, her
stark prayer held within. And the priest Eli asked, *Are you drunk, woman?*
No, I am a woman hard of heart, she said. Jagged hills stretched beyond,
strewn, perhaps, with other mournful songs—but God was faithful in her
exile. And Hannah saw what others failed to see. Air around her wavered. A
hand reached out, let fall a blessing. A weeping azure wash—now flaming,
fading. Walls nearby gone gold. Old colors condensed to meaning. All
distances dissolved, as if she were inside an old story, now entirely new. Blue
light fell around her like a fragment of the sky, like the sun that streamed
through a high church window one Sunday when my daughter held to the
glass a sign she'd made: *I love you God*. Then she, too, lived within a story all
her own. Then that same new light touched her face, her hand. Touched her
lovely hair.

Give Thanks

arr. Keveren

Wonderful Peace

Gustav Nordqvist

Peace, peace, wonderful peace, peace to the world is given.

Hushed are the angels, so still is the night;

Then in the East shone a heavenly light.

Join in the chorus, His praises sing!

Glory to God to the newly born King.

Peace, peace...

Peace, peace, bearer of peace,

All of good will receive Him.

Holiest of nights, O most wondrous of days;

Shepherds and kings lift their voices in praise.

Join in the chorus, His praises sing!

Glory to God, to the newly born King.

Peace, peace...

Improvisation

Phillip Keveren

In the Bleak Mid-Winter

Gustav Holst/arr. Phillip Keveren

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,

Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;

Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,

In the bleak midwinter long ago.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,

Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;

But His mother only, in her maiden bliss,

Worshiped the Beloved with a kiss.

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;

What can I give Him? Give my heart. I will give my heart...

Bird in the Body of the World

Angela Alaimo O'Donnell

December fifth, the first day of frost,
boxwood leaves silver in the sunlight.

Car windows coated, the glassy grass
crackles, fragile underfoot.

The sparrow steps lightly, as if he knows
what's coming. Days of deep darkness,
nests full of snow, wind that blows you into windows.

He does not curse, nor does he bless
the weather. He only takes what comes,
each dawn a day he never expected
to see. He is one of the Holy Ones.

He doesn't know the world is a wreck.
Everything that is is perfect.

Congregational Hymn (*Congregation standing.*)

Joy to the World

G.F. Handel, arr. John Rutter

1. (Congregation and Choir sing)

Joy to the world! the Lord is come: Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room, And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and heav'n and nature sing.

2. (Choir alone)

Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns: Let us our songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. (Choir alone)

Nor more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground,
he comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found.

4. (Congregation and Choir sing)

He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the nations
prove The glories of his righteousness, And wonders of his love,
And wonders of his love, And wonders, wonders of his love.

Formation

Larua Merzig Fabrycky

borne with chisels
to an unmade mother,
you carve me,

formed my days
and nights, my
habits, thoughts, desires.

without your presence,
interruptions, and the
work you required

I would never
have learned to
walk and talk.

you took my
hand. we stumbled
together, and I

see now that
you formed me
and I you.

I will light candles this Christmas

Kim André Arnesen

I will light Candles this Christmas;
Candles of joy, despite all sadness,
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,
Candles of courage for fears ever present,

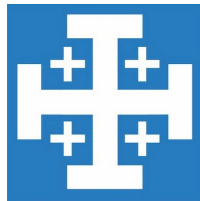
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,
Candles of love to inspire all my living,
Candles that will burn all year long.

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 others, To make music in the heart.

(Howard Thurman 1899-1981)

The Anthem ***“I will light candles this Christmas”***
is given to the glory of God for Franklin Merriman Staggs
by Lisa and Steve Staggs, Christmas 2024.



The Westminster Choir
Dr. John Semington, Director of Music Ministries
Dale Nickell, Associate Director of Music Ministries and Organist
Phillip Keveren, Instrumental Arranger and Pianist
David Davidson, Violin
David Angell, Violin
Seanad Chang, Viola
Austin Hoke, Cello
Sam Levine, Woodwinds
Ron Sorbo, Percussion
Rev. Dr. Donovan Drake, Reader

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES
DECEMBER 24, 2024

2:00 pm – Family Christmas Eve Service
with the Children’s Choirs

5:00 pm – Candlelight Service
Communion with the Westminster Choir

8:00 pm – Candlelight Service
Communion with the Westminster Choir

10:30 pm – Candlelight Service
Communion with the Laudate Youth Choir & Alumni (9:15 pm rehearsal)

DECEMBER 29

11:00 am • Sanctuary
Sunday Morning Service

PLEASE NOTE: One service only