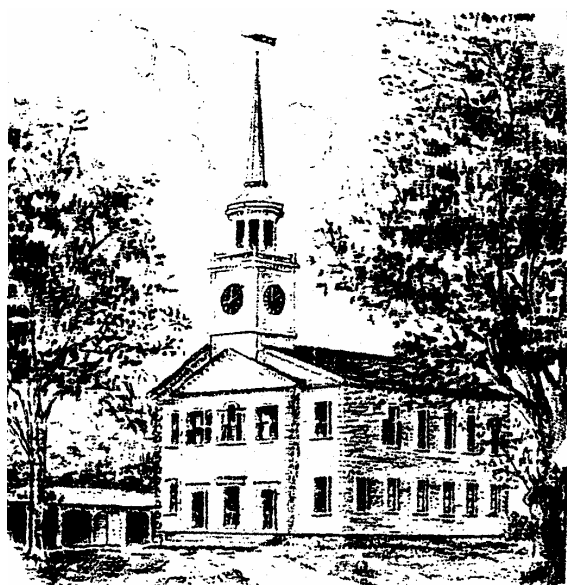


**THE FIRST CHURCH  
OF  
WEST BRIDGEWATER, MASSACHUSETTS**

*December 24, 2008 Christmas Eve 11:00 P.M.*

*Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols*

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PRELUDE

Rosemary Valentine

GREETING

GATHERING SONG

“O Holy Night”

No. 113

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

**P: And ransom captive Israel,**

L: That mourns in lonely exile here,

**P: Until the Son of God appear,**

L: Rejoice! Rejoice!

**P: Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!**

The First Lesson Isaiah 9:2-7

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian’s defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior’s boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

\* HYMN

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

No. 100 Vs. 1-2

\* PRAYER

Rev. Ashton

*God of life and light, a Child was born for us, a Son given to us. Open our hearts to receive Jesus, so that our lives may be filled with the peace of Jesus the Christ. Amen.*

THE SECOND LESSON Matthew 1:18-25

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name, Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” –

which means “God with us.” When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

HYMN “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”  
No. 128 Vs. 1-4

### THE THIRD LESSON Luke 2:1-7

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

HYMN “O Little Town of Bethlehem” No. 111 Vs. 1-4

### LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

*Almighty God, you have made this night holy by the gift of your Son, born of the Holy Spirit and of Mary. Upon him rested all your grace, through him has come all your mercy. Let this light shine within our hearts tonight even more brightly than it shines from the candles in this place. Help us to hear your words and to celebrate your everlasting love through him. Amen.*

HYMN “Away in a Manger” No. 132 Vs. 1-2

### THE FOURTH LESSON Luke 2:8-14

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

HYMN “The First Nowell” No. 108 Vs. 1-5

MESSAGE “*The First Family*” Rev. Ashton

### OFFERING

Invitation

*Remember the words of Jesus how he said it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

Anthem “*How Quietly*” Choir

\* Hymn “Angel’s We Have Heard on High”  
No. 121 Vs. 1-3

\* Unison Prayer of Dedication

***May these gifts of treasure proclaim your saving action in Jesus Christ. Through our offerings, empower this church to share the good news we have seen and heard. Equip us to sing with angels and run with shepherds. Fill us with your peace, that we may live more fully as peacemakers. Expand the horizons of our understanding and expectation, that we may move with confidence into those wider arenas where you call us to serve. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.***

THE FIFTH LESSON Luke 2:15-20

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

\* HYMN "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" No. 123 Vs. 1-3

(Congregation to form circle around sanctuary)

\* CANDLE LIGHTING

\* HYMN "Silent Night, Holy Night"

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright

Round yon Virgin Mother and Child, Holy Infant so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

*Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight,  
Glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing alleluia;*

**Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!**

*Silent night, holy night, Son of God, loves pure light  
Radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming  
grace, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.*

\* THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. Ashton

\* HYMN "Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come"

*Joy to the world! the Lord is come; let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing, and  
heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven  
and nature sing.*

*Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns: let men their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hill, and plains repeat the sounding  
joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*

*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.*

\* EXTINGUISHING OF CANDLES

(You are invited to take home your gift of candle.)

\* BLESSING

Rev. Ashton

\* POSTLUDE

Rosemary Valentine

*\* PLEASE STAND AS YOU ARE ABLE*