

Christmas Eve
Family Service with Nativity
December 24, 2025
5:00 p.m.

No matter who you are,
No matter where you are
On life's journey,
You are welcome here.

*Children are encouraged to choose a costume from the Narthex
and wear it during the service. Please return all costumes after worship.
Please silence cell phones.*

THOUGHT FOR PREPARATION

"We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide
with us, our Lord Emmanuel." *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, verse 4

PRELUDE

O Little Town of Bethlehem Lewis Redner
St. Arbucks Quartet arr. Carl Strommen
Brendan Henry, piano; Alex Austin, bass;
and Matt Plaskota, drums
Kris Hansen, soloist

WELCOME

Matt Fitzgerald

* WELCOMING EACH OTHER

* CALL TO WORSHIP

One: In the beginning was the word

All: and the word was with God and the word was God.

One: He was in the beginning with God, and all things came into being through
him.

All: In him was life and the life was the light of all people.

One: The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

All: Jesus the light of the world is coming!

* *Please stand if you are able to do so.*

* HYMN

O Come, All Ye Faithful

vv. 1 & 3

1. O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant, O
2. Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion, —
3. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py morn - ing, —

come ye, O come — ye to Beth - - le - hem;
Sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heaven — a - bove!
Je - sus, to thee — be all glo - - ry given;

Come and be - hold him, born the King of an - gels;
Glo - ry to God, all glo - ry in the high - est;
Word of the Fa - ther, now in flesh ap - pear - ing;

O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him,

O come, let us a - dore him, — Christ, — the Lord!

THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN SCRIPTURE AND SONG

THE PROPHECY FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES *Isaiah 9: 2; 6–7*

ANTHEM

O Holy Night

Adolphe Adam

Breanna and Todd Coe, soloists

O Holy Night!

The stars are brightly shining;

It is the night of the dear Savior's birth!

Long lay the world in sin and error pining,

Till he appear'd and the soul felt its worth.

A thrill of hope the weary soul rejoices,

For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!

Fall on your knees,

Oh, hear the angel voices

Oh, night divine;

Oh, night when Christ was born.

Oh, night divine.

Oh, night divine.

Truly He taught us to love one another;

His law is love and His gospel is peace.

Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother,

And in His name all oppression shall cease.

Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,

Let all within us praise His holy name.

Fall on your knees . . .

THE ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENT *Luke 1: 26-33; 38*

CAROL

Angels We Have Heard on High

Angels we have heard on high Sweet - ly sing - ing o'er the plains,
And the moun-tains in re - ply Echo - o - ing their joy - ous strains.
Glo - - - - - ri - a
in ex - cel - sis De - o, Glo - - - - -
- - - - - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - - - o.

The musical score is written for a single voice part in treble clef, key of B-flat major (two flats), and 4/4 time. It consists of five staves. The first two staves contain the main melody with lyrics. The third staff begins a long, sweeping melisma on the word 'Gloria'. The fourth staff continues the melody with lyrics and another melisma on 'Gloria'. The fifth staff concludes the piece with a final melisma on 'Gloria'.

THE FULFILLMENT IN THE GOSPEL *Luke 2: 1; 3-7*

CAROL

Away in a Manger

Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask you to stay close by me for -
- ev - er and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear chil - dren in
your ten - der care, and fit us for heav - en to live with you there.

The musical score is written for a single voice part in treble clef, key of B-flat major (two flats), and 3/4 time. It consists of three staves. The first staff contains the first line of the melody with lyrics. The second staff continues the melody with lyrics. The third staff concludes the piece with lyrics.

THE SHEPHERDS VISIT *Luke 2: 8-16*

CAROL

The First Nowell

The_ first___ Now - ell, the_ an - gel did say, Was to
cer - tain poor shep - herds in fields as they lay; In___
fields_ where they lay_ keep - ing their sheep, On a cold win - ter's
night that was___ so deep. Now - ell,___ Now - ell, Now -
- ell, Now - ell,___ Born is the king_ of Is - ra - el.

The image shows a musical score for the carol 'The First Nowell'. It consists of five staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words underlined to indicate phrasing. The melody is simple and traditional, with a mix of quarter, eighth, and half notes. The final staff ends with a double bar line.

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI *Matthew 2: 1-12*

CAROL

We Three Kings

vv. 1 & 5



1. We three kings of O - ri - ent are; bear - ing gifts we
 2. Born a King on Beth - le - hem's plain, gold I bring to
 3. Frank - in - cense to of - fer have I; in - cense owns a
 4. Myrrh is mine; its bit - ter per - fume breathes a life of
 5. Glo - rious now be - hold him a - rise; King and God and

tra - verse a - far, field and foun - tain, moor and moun - tain,
 crown him a - gain, King for - e - ver, ceas - ing ne - ver,
 De - i - ty nigh; prayer and prais - ing, voi - ces rais - ing,
 gath - er - ing gloom; sor - rowing, sigh - ing, bleed - ing, dy - ing,
 sac - ri - fice: Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia,

fol - low - ing yon - der star.
 o - ver us all to reign.
 wor - ship - ing God on high. O star of won - der, star of light,
 sealed in the stone - cold tomb.
 sounds through the earth and skies.

star with roy - al beau - ty bright, west - ward lead - ing,
 still pro - ceed - ing, guide us to thy per - fect light.

GOD'S STORY IS OUR STORY

All children are invited as we call up their character to come forward to the manger. *Parents are also welcome to come forward with their children.*

THE PRESENTATION OF OUR GIFTS

Jeff Carlson

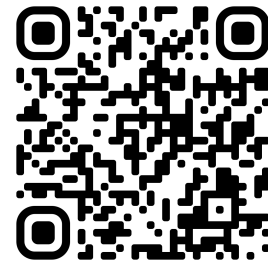
Every dollar of our Christmas Eve offering is supporting our Migrant Housing Project Fund. Your offering is helping the families we support rebuild their lives in the US.

You can give to the Christmas Eve Fund electronically by:

Scanning this code with your cell phone camera,

At spucc.churchcenter.com/giving,

Or through Zelle or PayPal to giving@spucc.org.



OFFERTORY

O Come, O Come Emmanuel
St. Arbucks Quartet

arr. Bradley Sowash

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Lord of Lords appear.
Rejoice, rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

CHRISTMAS EVE REFLECTION AND PRAYER

Liz Nickerson

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

*Those seated on the aisles, light your candles from the candelabras
and pass it down your row.*

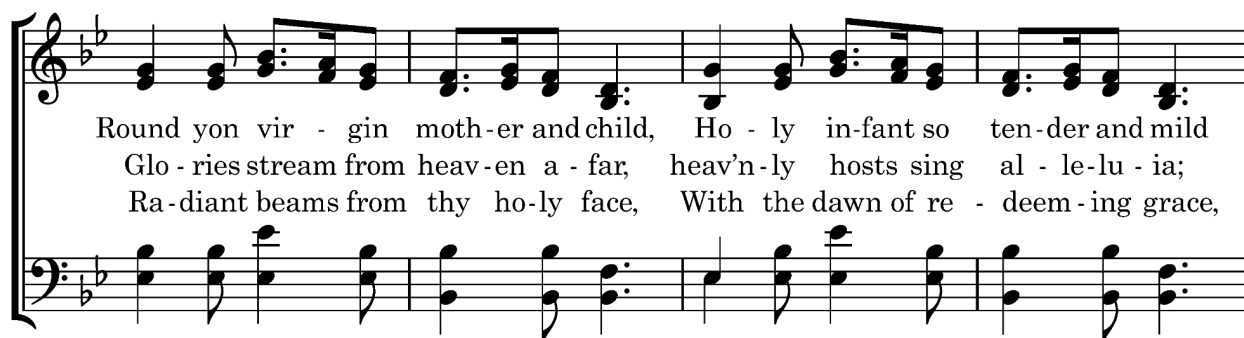
* CAROL

Silent Night

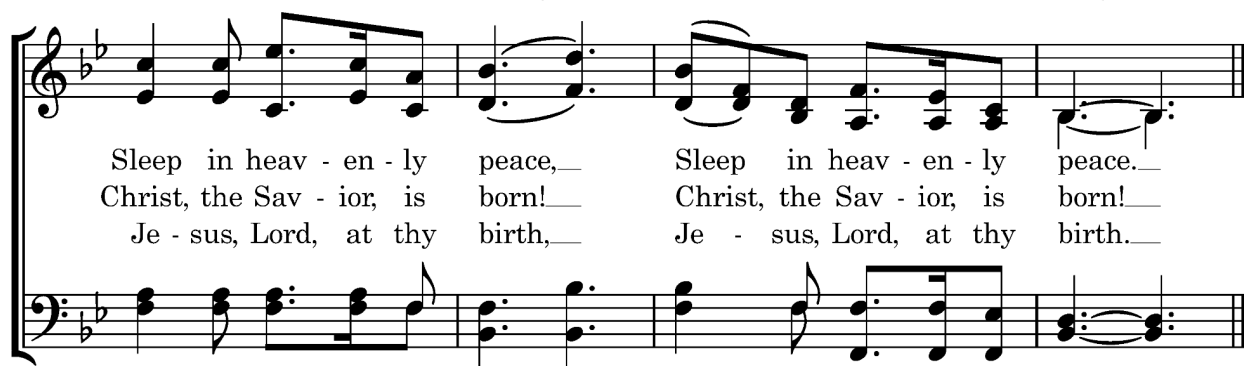
vv. 1 & 3



1. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, All is calm, all is bright
2. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Shep - herds quake at the sight,
3. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Son of God, love's pure light



Round yon vir - gin moth - er and child, Ho - ly in - fant so ten - der and mild
Glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far, heav'n - ly hosts sing al - le - lu - ia;
Ra - diant beams from thy ho - ly face, With the dawn of re - deem - ing grace,



Sleep in heav - en - ly peace, — Sleep in heav - en - ly peace. —
Christ, the Sav - ior, is born! — Christ, the Sav - ior, is born! —
Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth, — Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth. —

BENEDICTION

CAROL

Joy to the World

vv. 1 & 2

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come: Let earth re -
 2. Joy to the earth! the Sav - ior reigns: Let men their
 3. He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the

-ceive her king; Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him room,
 songs em - ploy; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 na - tions prove The glo - ries of his righ - teous - ness,

And heav'n and na - ture sing, And heav'n and na - ture
 Re - peat the sound - ing joy, Re - peat the sound - ing
 And won - ders of his love, And won - ders of his

And heav'n and na - ture sing, And
 Re - peat the sound - ing joy, Re -
 And won - ders of his love, And

sing, And heav'n and heav'n and na - ture sing.
 joy, Re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 love, And won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heav'n and na - ture sing.
 -peat the sound - ing joy,
 won - ders of his love.

POSTLUDE

Toccata from Symphony V
Kevin Dzierzawski, organ

Charles Marie Widor

Hush

Sssh.

Can you hear it?
An expectant silence,
a hushed anticipation,
as if the very galaxy
is holding its breath.
There are some truths
even the stars know,
like darkness,
like loneliness
and how the night
can be a living thing.
And how once, long ago,
the night waited in wonder
along with the darkness
and the loneliness,
for the sound of a baby's cry,
for the miraculous⁷⁷
to come down
to the earth mundane.

— written by Lucinda Hynett, in ***Alive Now***

Tonight's Offering Makes Room at the Inn

We are using every dollar of this evening's offering to help migrant families. Over the past three years, Saint Pauls has assisted five Venezuelan migrant families by housing them in our building and helping them achieve financial independence. Today, nearly every single member of these families has achieved legal status, safeguarding their presence in Chicago and allowing them to work. Such support and legal aid is costly. In a time of wild anxiety, you can help make room in the inn for migrant families by supporting the Saint Pauls Migrant Housing Project Fund with a generous gift this evening.

Please give through the offering plate, or by any of our online giving methods:

You can give to Saint Pauls Migrant Legal Aid

one of four ways:

- 1) Scan this QR code
- 2) visit spucc.churchcenter.com/giving
- 3) Use Zelle or PayPal giving@spucc.org.
- 4) Place a gift in the offering plate.



TONIGHT'S MUSIC

The poetry for ***O Little Town of Bethlehem*** has a wonderful story. Phillips Brooks (1835-1893), an American, took a trip to Israel in 1865 at the close of the Civil War. The Reverend Brooks spent Christmas in Bethlehem in 1866, and this poem poured forth in 1868 as a result of that visit. ST. LOUIS, which is the tune most Americans know, was also composed in 1868 by Louis Redner (1831-1908), a Sunday School superintendent in Philadelphia. It was composed the night before it was sung at his church, and it is the only one for which he is remembered.

O Come, All Ye Faithful, known by the Latin tune title ADESTE FIDELES, is definitely a carol that we sing on Christmas Eve, BUT how appropriate the words are after a separation from each other for more than a year, *O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant...* The words and music are attributed to John Francis Wade (1711-1786), who wrote the text originally in Latin. He left England in 1745 because of the persecution of Catholics. The English text was added by Frederick Oakeley (1802-1880), an Anglican priest, in the mid-19th century.

O Holy Night (*Minuit, chrétiens*) was composed in 1847 by Adolph Adam (1803-1856). The poetry was written in 1847 by Placide Cappeau (1808 -1877). The original title, *Cantique de Noël*, and text are in French. Adam also composed a great deal of music for the theater and ballet. Cappeau was a wine dealer, but the focus of his life was literature.

Angels We Have Heard on High is originally an 18th century French Noël (carol) freely translated by James Chadwick (1813-1882), an Irish Catholic priest. GLORIA is from the text of the joyfully cascading Latin refrain, which we sing as a Benediction Response after Christmas and during Epiphany.

The original text for ***Away in a Manger*** was written by Martin Luther (1483-1546) for his own children. The English text for the first stanza that is so familiar is unattributed. The tune, MUELLER, was composed by American James R. Murray (1841-1905). He was a friend of another great 19th century American hymnodist, William Bradbury. He also fought in the Civil War.

The author of the text for ***The First Nowell*** (or Noël) is anonymous and dates from 1833. The tune, THE FIRST NOEL, is a traditional English carol. Nowell is a more common spelling of the word. Noël is the French word that many of us see more often and means Christmas.

We Three Kings is a truly American hymn. It was composed in 1857 by an Episcopalian priest, John H. Hopkins (1820–1891). His father was the Bishop of

Vermont. Hopkins was also an ecclesiologist, which means he was interested in church art. He designed stained glass and other church ornaments.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel is thought of as a Christmas carol, but its text definitely references the anticipation of Advent. The original Latin, VENI EMMANUEL, was translated in 1851 by J. M. Neale (1818-1866). He was a member of the British clergy, and struggled with ill health his entire life. Neale also composed the texts for many other hymns including *All Glory Laud and Honor* and translated many other Latin texts like *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*.

Our own St. Arbucks Quartet recorded ***O Come, O Come Emmanuel*** on an album, ***Mid-Winter Gifts***, featuring music they have played during our worship services. It is available FREE to you and everyone online. Here is a link to the album on Spotify: open.spotify.com/album/5FEG6gRZPMTNBvaBINborm, and Apple Music: music.apple.com/us/album/mid-winter-gifts-ep/1611741689. It is the same music on both sites, simply choose your preferred platform. You do not need a Spotify or Apple Music account to listen. Please feel free to share these links with your friends.

The story of ***Silent Night (Stille Nacht)*** is so sweet. On Christmas Eve in 1818, Franz Gruber (1787-1863), an Austrian church organist and choir master, faced a disaster. The organ became unplayable that day. He composed, played guitar and sang *Stille Nacht* for Christmas Eve services that night. The text was written by Joseph Mohr (1792-1848) in 1815. It has become one of the most beloved of all carols in any language.

The text for ***Joy to the World*** was composed in 1719 by the famous British poet and theologian, Isaac Watts (1674-1748). Watts' great contribution was setting the entire Book of Psalms poetically. This is a paraphrase of both Psalms 98 & 96. One of his most well beloved texts is *Our God, Our Help In Ages Past*. ANTIOCH was composed by George Friderick Handel (1685-1759), who also composed *Messiah*, and was adapted as a hymn by Lowell Mason (1792-1872). Mason is often referred to as the father of American church music for his contributions.

The ***Toccata*** from *Symphony V in F Major, Op. 42, No. 1* was composed in 1879 by Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937). This fiery work is beloved not only at St. Pauls, but also organists and audiences around the world. The *Toccata* shows off the composing skill of Widor, the technical prowess of the organist, and the huge range of colors of larger instruments. Widor, along with Louis Vierne (1870-1937), were the great French Romantic symphonists for the organ. Vierne held the post of Organist at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris and Widor held the same position at St. Sulpice, also in Paris.

TONIGHT'S WORSHIP LEADERS

Clergy: Matt Fitzgerald, Jeff Carlson, Liz Nickerson

Music Director: Kurt R. Hansen

Organist: Kevin Dzierzawski

Head Usher: Beatrice Jaji

Ushers: Mary Brown, Dodd Brown, Ninon Freeman, Fred Pearson

Gatekeeper: Dodd Brown

Camera Operators: Jim Alrutz, Marie Ankenman, Bob Ball, Jose Cruz, Brian Hafner

Custodians: Ramiro Gonzalez, Vince Luri

UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER 25 – INVITATION TO CHRISTMAS BRUNCH

Join us for a Christmas Day brunch potluck at St. Pauls. Sure to be included is a wassail cup, conviviality and fellowship! All ages welcome.

Time: 11-3 pm

Place: St. Pauls

Contact: Ninon Freeman for additional information, reservations and food/drink

Suggestions: 312-447-1330 and nlanda05@yahoo.com.

JANUARY 4, 2026 – BIBLE OFF BROADWAY REHEARSALS

Bible Off Broadway is coming on February 1, 2026! If you have kids age 3 through high school, remember that January's church school program is Bible Off Broadway rehearsals! Starting January 4, bring your kids to the Social Hall by 9:30 a.m. sharp each Sunday for the rehearsal kickoff. Whether on stage or behind the scenes, we'll have something for every young person to do and enjoy. Please fill out the BOB Parent Survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/QDF538W so we know what your child would like to do!

JANUARY 7, 2026 – NEW YEAR, NEW BIBLE STUDY BEGINS! - Noon, Zoom

What did it mean for the early Christians to follow Jesus in the midst of a violent world empire? How were they to live as an alternative community that looked like Jesus and not like Rome? These are questions they faced and that we also face in our post-Christian world. This winter we'll be studying 1 & 2 Peter and Jude, small books that wrestle with these big questions. Led by Jeff Carlson, we meet every Wednesday over Zoom for about 40 minutes. Sign up here: tinyurl.com/y3w7fkpw.

JANUARY 11, 2026 – LUNCH MAKING FOR LPCS - 11:15 a.m., Kitchen

Right after church, come to SPUCC's kitchen and help make sack lunches for the residents of Lincoln Park Community Services. We provide all the needed food, but volunteers are asked to contribute \$25 each to help cover food costs for the lunches. Donations can be made via cash, Venmo, or Zelle. We're typically done by 12:15 p.m.

If you're interested, please use Church Center to sign-up: tinyurl.com/e4m9v9zz.

JANUARY 11, 2026 – DINNER MAKING FOR LPCS - 4 p.m., Kitchen

Join us in preparing and delivering dinner for residents of the Lincoln Park Community Shelter. We meet at SPUCC at 4 p.m. and deliver the meal to LPCS (600 W. Fullerton) around 6 p.m. We provide the needed food, but volunteers are asked to contribute \$25 each to help cover food costs for the dinner. Donations can be made via cash, Venmo, or Zelle.

If you're interested, please use Church Center to sign-up: tinyurl.com/5dmys5hc.

JANUARY 28, 2026 – COOKIES FOR A CAUSE (BAKE YOUR FAVORITE COOKIES AT HOME NOW!) - 5:30 p.m., Kitchen

Join the St. Paul's cookie bakers for dinner, socializing, and cookie making on Wednesday, January 28. Meet us in the kitchen at 5:30 p.m. (or when you can). We eat dinner around 6:30 p.m. Cookies will be donated to A Just Harvest and the Lincoln Park Community Shelter. If you can't attend but want to contribute, drop off cookies labeled with your name and "MARCIA" at the church by Wednesday, January 28. To reserve a spot or find out what supplies are needed, contact Marcia Volk at marcia@volkonline.com or (773) 307-6866, or Gloria Joseph at glrjoseph@yahoo.com.

FEBRUARY 1, 2026 – NEW MEMBER CLASS - 11:15 a.m., Room 211

Join pastors, members and others curious about St. Pauls for our New Member Class. Together, we'll talk about faith and our community and we'd love for you to be part of the conversation! We'll meet after worship and childcare will be provided as needed. See upcoming dates here: spucc.org/new_member_classes.

THEOLOGY AND POETRY IN A YEAR

What does it mean to say God is in control? What does Jesus accomplish? How should I live as a Christian? What kind of authority does the bible have? Led by Pastor Matt, this group is for those who want a clear understanding of Christianity. REGISTER HERE: tinyurl.com/2hhd7bfe Rather than reading the work of a theologian, we will read eight poems a month, then meet over Zoom for a monthly class, for one year. Each set of poems will speak to a key Christian doctrine. You don't need to love (or even like) poems to join this lively, powerful program. At the end of the year, you'll understand Christianity better than ever, and may be transformed in other ways. Meetings will be in the evening, standing date TBD.

ABOUT ST. PAULS

Making a Joyful Sound in the City!

St. Pauls UCC has a vibrant history in the city of Chicago. Founded in 1843, we are one of the city's oldest churches. In 1989, we became one of America's first congregations to declare ourselves "Open and Affirming" of LGBTQ+ people.

From founding Chicago's largest provider of social services to at-risk children to starting a home for the elderly, from housing protestors at the 1968 Democratic Convention to hosting Lincoln Park's first MLK day march against violence on Chicago's streets, we are proud to make a joyful sound in the city.

Most important, during the past 180 years we are glad to have introduced thousands of children and adults to the amazing, inclusive, life changing, uplifting love of God. We do so in worship that is traditional, but far from conventional.

Senior Pastor Matt Fitzgerald, mfitzgerald@spucc.org

Associate Pastor Jeff Carlson, jcarlson@spucc.org

Associate Pastor Liz Nickerson, lnickerson@spucc.org

For a complete list of St. Pauls Staff, Governance, and Lay Leadership
Please visit www.spucc.org/contact

St. Pauls United Church of Christ
2335 N Orchard St. | Chicago, IL 60614
(773) 348-3829 www.spucc.org

Free Parking is available Sundays from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
at the Lincoln Common Parking Garage, 2316 N. Lincoln Ave.
Parking validation is available in the Narthex.



WELCOME TO SAINT PAULS UCC!

Welcome to those whose hearts are on fire with faith,
and to those who bring their doubt inside our doors.

Welcome to our first time guests and
our longtime members.

Welcome to single people, tiny children,
grandparents and families of all configurations.

Welcome to those who rejoice and to those who grieve.

Welcome to LGBTQ+ people.

Welcome to each and to everyone.

We are blessed by your presence and
we are glad you are here.