GATHERING

PRELUDE
“Lo, How a Rose ‘Ere Blooming”
Johannes Brahms
Linda Dover, organ

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP (spoken together)

People of the world, it is time to celebrate new beginnings.
Let us step into the new year with faith!
People of faith, it is time to look ahead in hope.
Let us step into the unknown with hope!
People of hope, it is time to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.
Let us step forward together as God’s family!

HYMN 147
“The First Nowell”
THE FIRST NOWELL
(st. 1, 2, & 3 Verse Only, No Refrain; – st. 4 & 6 Full Verse & Refrain)
1 The first Now-ell the an-gel did say was to cer-tain poor
2 They look-ed up and saw a star shin-ing in the
3 And by the light of that same star three wise men
4 This star drew nigh to the north-west; o’er Beth - le-

shep-herds in fields as they lay, in fields where they lay keep-ing
east be-yond them far; and to the earth it gave
came from coun-try far; to seek for a king was their
hem it took its rest, and there it did both stop

their sheep, on a cold win-ter’s night that was so deep.
great light, and so it con-tin-ued both day and night.
in-tent, and to fol-low the star wher-ev-er it went.
and stay, right o-ver the place where Je-sus lay.

Refrain

Now - ell, Now - ell, Now - ell, Now - ell,

"Nowell" is the English form of the French “noël,” a shout of joy formerly used at Christmas (as in Chaucer’s “Franklin’s Tale”), a clue that the word is older than its first printing. It may have Latin and French roots related to “born” (natus / né) as well to “news” (noua / nouvelle).
A TIME WITH STEWART

PRAYER FOR LOVE (video)

ASSURANCE OF GOD’S LOVE & SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST
One: May the peace of Christ be with you.
All: And also with you and all others!

HYMN 144 "In the Bleak Midwinter" CRANHAM
In the Bleak Midwinter

1 In the bleak mid-winter, frosty wind made moan;
2 Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;
3 Angels and archangels may have gathered there;
4 What can I give him, poor as I am?

Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign;
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter a stable place sufficed
But his mother only, in her maiden bliss,
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;

In the bleak mid-winter, long ago,
The Lord God incarnate, Jesus Christ,
Yet what can I give him: give my heart.

Though this text describes winter weather in England rather than in Palestine, the poet is using familiar surroundings as a means of making the Nativity more immediate and personal. The tune name honors a Gloucestershire village near the composer’s birthplace in Cheltenham.
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.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

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.

*Solo*  
“It Came Upon a Midnight Clear”  
David Sutherland, tenor  
arr. David Foster & Sarah Michael Foster  
*The “it” of the first line of this text does not refer to the birth of Jesus, but to “that glorious song of old,” the angelic tidings of peace on earth.*

*Sermon*  
“Ending/Beginning”  
Rev. Mitch Trigger

A Call to Stewardship
PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION
   The Great Thanksgiving
   Breaking of the Bread
   Communion of the People
   Prayer after Communion

HYMN 136 “Go, Tell It on the Mountain” GO TELL IT
136 Go, Tell It on the Mountain

Go, tell it on the mountain, o'er the hills and everywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

1. While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
   behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.

2. The shepherds feared and trembled when lo! above the earth
   rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth.

3. Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,
   and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

Like other material from oral traditions, 19th-century African American spirituals flourished without being written down. Their refrains were their most stable parts, and narrative stanzas were often improvised to fit. These Nativity stanzas attempt to recall that tradition.
CHARGE & BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

“How Brightly Shines the Morning Star”
Linda Dover, organ

J.S. Bach

GOD’S PEACE TO YOU

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