

### Welcome:

On behalf of the choir and Seattle First Baptist Church, I want to welcome you to our 2018 Holiday concert, *The Promise of Light*. Tonight we open with *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* and invite you to sing as we rejoice in God's promise together. We know that though we see in the world around us the weight of lonely exile, Emmanuel shall come. We sing because despite the gloomy clouds of night, Emmanuel shall come...no matter the envy, the strife, the quarrels that separate the nations of the world or that cause us to retreat to our own separate corners, Emmanuel shall come. Friends, you are invited to remain seated and to sing the first and last verse as we rejoice in *The Promise of Light*.

### Purify, Magnify, Serve.

Purification may have a negative connotation to many of us today. For centuries, many great Christian writers and theologians wrote about purification, particularly in the time of Advent and Lent as one is washed of sin. At Seattle first Baptist, we do not sing of purification as something that will be done to others to "fix" their imperfections, rather we sing to prepare ourselves and to open our hearts to hear God's call and to do God's work. With all that is happening in our world today...especially in our country...it is tempting to point the finger and label another as impure or in need of fixing. It seems every week there is a new headline of a mass shooting. It seems every week that an unarmed person of color is killed for no reason except the fear that lives in our culture. It seems on a daily basis a woman's word does not carry the same strength or credibility as that of a man. Taking our inspiration from Mary – a young, scared, and recent mother-to-be - we seek to magnify the Lord, we sing of all the great things She has done, and we get up every morning ready to do God's work as we shout: yes! Yes! We are joyful in the Lord. Yes! we will serve our neighbor with gladness. Yes, Lord, this Advent I am ready. Send me to be your light.

### O great Mystery

As the carol suggests, what does it mean to "come adore Him?" Are we to bring Him gifts as the wisemen did? Are we to sing of His glory as the angels did? As we see footage of our government using tear gas on innocent men, women, and children fleeing the violence of their own country, clearly one of the most important lessons every Christmas is that the king we celebrate was born in a stable to a poor, refugee mother. Later in his life, Jesus taught us to sell all that we own and follow the path of God, as the humble and meek are to be blessed. The Mystery of Christmas then is not just how can a Virgin give birth to the Son of God, but part of the mystery today remains how do we live as Jesus did? How can we detach ourselves from everything we own, and instead do justice and walk humbly with our God? As we sing praises to God with trumpet fanfares to herald a king, we remember that "mild he lays his glory by." As we come and adore the Prince of Peace, the Sun of Righteousness, we at Seattle First Baptist believe that he was "Born to raise us all from earth." To follow Jesus is to raise up not just those who look like us or those who believe what we believe, but we are called to extend a helping hand to anyone who is in need; to be a promise of light and life to all. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to all of good will.

### A Prayer for Peace

Tonight we hold in our hearts worldwide all those who do not have a roof over their heads: may we call upon ourselves to serve those in need. We pray for peace for those who suffer in armed conflicts, especially for the children separated from their families at our borders: may citizens worldwide find a voice to hold those in power accountable. We pray for children growing up in a new culture where seemingly words don't matter: may the adults in their lives model thoughtful and respectful communication. We pray for the victims of gun violence and for teachers who devote their lives to not just teaching but protecting the next generation from harm: may we all have the courage to continue to urge our leaders to find effective solutions.

On this silent and holy night, we excitedly sing our favorite carols. We sit back and enjoy the holiday lights in this beautiful church as they warm our bodies and our souls: All is calm and all is bright. By any measurable standard, even the poorest among us are the richest people on this planet. We are so grateful to sing for you tonight. We are grateful for our church community and to laugh and sing with friends. We feel so blessed as most of us will surely drive home and hug someone before we go to bed: we will sleep in heavenly peace, surrounded in love and light, and we are so grateful. Amen.

### Blessing

At Seattle First Baptist, we believe that God has not only sent us to bring the good news to the oppressed, the prisoners, and the broken-hearted, but that we are called to be that light, to be servants of peace and justice. The *Promise of Light* is not some far-off unseen magical fix to the world's problems. The Promise of Light is YOU. Take Jesus' life as a model for how to bring peace: never underestimate the effect of your actions or words. When you feel powerless as the world around you spins out of control, always remember the significance of just showing up and speaking out. In addition to singing praises to God, in our celebration of song we seek to renew our strength as a welcoming community as we go out into the world to serve our neighbors. We hope to inspire you to do the same. Go forth with this message of joy. Go forth with this *Promise of Light*.