

God Our Father, Christ Our Redeemer, Holy Spirit Our Comforter, Humankind Our Family

Saint John African Methodist Episcopal Church

708 -15th Street North || Birmingham, AL 35203

Rev. Dr. Ronald D. Sterling, Pastor



The Celebration of Advent and Children's Christmas

Sunday, December 18, 2022 - 10:00am

Prelude.....Music Ministry

Doxology *Praise God from whom all blessing flow: Praise Him, all creatures here below:
Praise Him above ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

Call To Worship.....Pastor Ronald D. Sterling

Minister: I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!
Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!

People: For a day in your courts is better than a thousand, elsewhere, I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Minister: For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.

People: They are planted in the house of the Lord, they flourish in the courts of our God.

Minister: O Lord, I love the habitation of your house, and the place where your glory dwells.

People: But the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.

Minister: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my Rock, and my Redeemer.

Together: O sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things! Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth, sing praises!

Hymn of Celebration....."O Little Town of Bethlehem"

O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!
Above Thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
Yet in the dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth!

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him, still
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

Invocation.....Rev. Sherri Radney

Prayer Response....."Emmanuel, Emmanuel"

*Emmanuel, Emmanuel,
His name is called
Emmanuel.*

*God with us, revealed in us,
His name is called
Emmanuel.*

Scripture.....Sister Shirley Bailey

Matthew 1:18-25 (English Standard Version)

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Preface to the Decalogue *(Standing)*

*From all that dwell below the skies Let the Creator's praise arise:
Let the Redeemer's name be sung, Through every land by every tongue.*

Summary of the Decalogue.....Sister Megan Spears

Hear what Christ our Savior saith, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments, hang all the law and the prophets."

Gloria Patri

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost:
As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.*

PLEASE REMAIN STANDING FOR THE CONFESSION AND DECLARATION OF PARDON

Confession and Declaration of Pardon.....Rev. Xavier Beasley

Minister: "Holy Spirit, come into my heart and show me my sins. Give me a proper spirit of repentance and the grace to make an earnest confession.

Minister and People: Let us confess our sins

Eternal God, in whom we live and move and have our being, whose face is hidden from us by our sins, and whose mercy we forget in the blindness of our hearts: cleanse us from all our offenses, and deliver us from proud thoughts and vain desires, that with reverent and humble hearts we may draw near to you, confessing our faults, confiding in your grace, and finding in you our refuge and strength; through Jesus Christ your Son.

Declaration of Pardon

In Christ Jesus, God offers us a full pardon. By a complete and overwhelming sacrifice, Jesus paid for our sins so that the pardon could be offered to us by a righteous God. It is up to us to accept it but like Jesus lives a new life, so must we. We become united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection when we obey the gospel, and arise from baptism to walk "in newness of life." Sin is no longer to be our master; but Jesus is. We receive our pardon of grace by becoming "obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed." This is how to receive God's pardon and to be freed from sin. Accept God's pardon and live!

The Fourth Candle Lighting -LOVE- Purple Candle



Sister Christine Dillard, Kya Ann Elizabeth Dillard, Clara Faith Dillard

LOVE - Faith in action

Trusting God's love for you is **faith in action**, standing in the belief that God loves you deeper than you can comprehend. This trust is a daily journey of overcoming doubt and our own insecurities, even when we are suffering. Ask him. This is part of prayer. Lord, help me to see the daily acts of love you send my way.

Kya

Love is God’s character and He cannot do anything that is outside of who He is. He sees the big picture of our lives and always knows and does what is best for our eternal future even though we don’t understand and it doesn’t feel like it.

Clara

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them. -Romans 8:28

Mrs. Dillard: We light this last purple candle and remember that:

*The faithful love of the Lord never ends!
His mercies never cease.
Great is His faithfulness;
His mercies begin afresh each morning.* -Lamentations 3:22–23

God’s LOVE is trustworthy, eternal and secure. *(Light last purple candle)*

The Children’s Christmas

Liturgical Praise Dance.....The Angels of Jeremiah

Pastor’s Words and Greetings to Visitors

Blessing of the Offertory *(Tithes / Offerings / Benevolent)*

Sermonic Selection.....Music Ministry

SERMON.....REV. DR. RONALD D. STERLING

Invitation to Christian Discipleship

Affirmation of Faith

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. The third day, He arose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, The Church Universal, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

*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.*

Benediction.....Rev. Dr. Ronald D. Sterling