

**dcrau001232001.wav / John H. Westerhoff, III - Service of the Lord's Supper: Communion Meditation  
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(soft music) (choir singing foreign language) (soft music) ♪ I heard the bells on Christmas Day ♪ ♪ Their old familiar carols play ♪ ♪ And mild and sweet their words repeat ♪ ♪ Of peace on earth good will to men ♪ ♪ I thought as how this day had come ♪ ♪ The belfries of all Christendom ♪ ♪ Had rolled along the unbroken song ♪ ♪ Of peace on earth, good will to men ♪ ♪ And in despair I bowed my head ♪ ♪ There is no peace on earth, I said ♪ ♪ For hate is strong and mocks the song ♪ ♪ Of peace on earth, good will to men ♪ ♪ Then pealed the bells more loud and deep ♪ ♪ God is not dead, nor doth he sleep ♪ ♪ The wrong shall fail, the right prevail ♪ ♪ With peace on earth, good will to men ♪ ♪ Good will to men ♪ (singing in foreign language) ♪ Jesus Christ was born ♪ (choir singing) (singing in foreign language) ♪ Jesus Christ was born ♪ ♪ Hark how the bells ♪ ♪ Sweet silver bells ♪ ♪ All seem to say ♪ ♪ Throw cares away ♪ ♪ Christmas is here ♪ ♪ Bringing good cheer ♪ ♪ To young and old ♪ ♪ Meek and the bold ♪ ♪ Ding dong ding dong ♪ ♪ That is their song ♪ ♪ With joyful ring ♪ ♪ All caroling ♪ ♪ One seems to hear ♪ ♪ Words of good cheer ♪ ♪ From everywhere ♪ ♪ Filling the air ♪ ♪ Oh how they pound ♪ ♪ Raising the sound ♪ ♪ O'er hill and dale ♪ ♪ Telling their tale ♪ ♪ Gaily they ring ♪ ♪ While people sing ♪ ♪ Songs of good cheer ♪ ♪ Christmas is here ♪ ♪ Merry, Merry, Merry, Merry Christmas ♪ ♪ Merry, Merry, Merry, Merry Christmas ♪ ♪ On on they send ♪ ♪ On without end ♪ ♪ Their joyful tone ♪ ♪ To every home ♪ ♪ Hark how the bells ♪ ♪ Sweet silver bells ♪ ♪ All seem to say ♪ ♪ Throw cares away ♪ ♪ Christmas is here ♪ ♪ Bringing good cheer ♪ ♪ To young and old ♪ ♪ Meek and the bold ♪ ♪ Ding dong, ding dong ♪ ♪ That is their song ♪ ♪ With joyful ring ♪ ♪ All caroling ♪ ♪ One seems to hear ♪ ♪ Words of good cheer ♪ ♪ From everywhere ♪ ♪ Filling the air ♪ ♪ Oh how they pound ♪ ♪ Raising the sound ♪ ♪ O'er hill and dale ♪ ♪ Telling their tale ♪ ♪ Gaily they ring ♪ ♪ While people sing ♪ ♪ Songs of good cheer ♪ ♪ Christmas is here ♪ ♪ Merry, Merry, Merry, Merry Christmas ♪ ♪ Merry, Merry, Merry, Merry Christmas ♪ ♪ On on they send ♪ ♪ On without end ♪ ♪ Their joyful tone ♪ ♪ To every home ♪ ♪ On on they send ♪ ♪ On without end ♪ ♪ Their joyful tone ♪ ♪ To every home ♪ ♪ Ding dong ding dong ding (soft music)

- Good morning and welcome to this service of worship at Duke University Chapel. It is a pleasure to welcome to our pulpit today Dr. John Westerhoff, who is Professor of Religious Education at Duke University Divinity School. Dr. Westerhoff is a beloved figure, not only here at Duke, but throughout the world where he is well known as an author, as a teacher, and as a retreat leader. Dr. Westerhoff, we extend a warm welcome to you today. We are also privileged to honor as our guest choir today, the Raleigh Boy Choir under the direction of conductor Thomas Sibley. This very fine choir has assisted us in the leadership of worship before, and we are truly delighted to have them back with us again today. And now let us join our hearts as one as we worship God. Grace and peace to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Come, let us worship the Lord who established a new covenant through His son, Jesus Christ. (congregation speaking) ("O Come All Ye Faithfull") ♪ O Come All Ye Faithful ♪ ♪ Joyful and triumphant ♪ ♪ O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem ♪ ♪ Come and behold Him ♪ ♪ Born the King of Angels ♪ ♪ O come, let us adore Him ♪ ♪ O come, let us adore Him ♪ ♪ O come, let us adore Him ♪ ♪ Christ the Lord ♪ ♪ O Sing, choirs of angels ♪ ♪ Sing in exultation ♪ ♪ Sing all ye citizens of heaven above ♪ ♪ Glory to God ♪ ♪ Glory in the highest ♪ ♪ O come, let us adore Him ♪ ♪ O come, let us adore Him ♪ ♪ O come, let us adore Him ♪ ♪ Christ the Lord ♪ ♪ Hail Lord, we greet Thee ♪ ♪ Born this happy morning ♪ ♪ Jesus for evermore be Thy name adored ♪ ♪ Word of the Father, now in flesh

appearing ♪ ♪ O come, let us adore Him ♪ ♪ O come, let us adore Him ♪ ♪ O come, let us adore Him ♪ ♪ Christ the Lord ♪ Let us pray. Let us worship our creator, the God of love. God continually preserves and sustains us. We have been loved with an everlasting love. Through Jesus Christ we have been given complete knowledge of God's glory. (congregation speaking) Let us glory at the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor. He was tempted in all points as we are, but He was without sin. He went about doing good and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom. He accepted death, death on a cross. He was dead, and is alive forever. He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all who trust in Him. He sits in glory at the right hand of God. He will come again to be our judge. (congregation speaking) Let us rejoice in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The Lord, the giver of life. Through the Spirit we are born into the family of God. And made members of the body of Christ. The witness of the Spirit confirms us. The wisdom teaches us. The power enables us. The Spirit will do far more for us than we ask or think. All praise to you, Holy Spirit. You may be seated.

- Let us say together in unison. Open our hearts and minds, oh God. By the power of your Holy Spirit. So that as the word is read and proclaimed we might hear with joy what you say to us this day. Amen. The first lesson is taken from Isaiah chapter 61, verse 10 and chapter 62, verse three. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall exalt in my God. For he has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. As a bride groomed ex himself with a garland. And the bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoes, and as the guarding causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness, and pray to spring forth before all the nations. For Zion's sake I will not keep silent. And for Jerusalem's sake, I will not rest. Until heard of indication goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a burning torch. The nations shall be called by a new name. Which the mouth of the Lord will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord. And a royal diadem in the hand of your God. This ends the reading of the first lesson. (soft music) ♪ Lord, now let us-- ♪ (muffled singing) ♪ Glory be 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 ♪ The second lesson is taken from Galatians chapter four, verses four through seven. But when the time had fully come God sent forth His son, born of woman, born under the law. To redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the spirit of His son into your hearts, crying abba father. So through God you are no longer a slave, but a son. And if a son, then an heir. This ends the reading of the second lesson. (soft music) (choir singing)

- In respect for the Gospel, let us rise. The holy Gospel of the Lord according to Saint Luke. And when the day came for Mary and Joseph to be purified as laid down by the law of Moses, they took Jesus up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord, observing what stands written in the law of the Lord. Every first born male must be consecrated to the Lord. And also to offer in sacrifice in accordance with what is said in the law of the Lord. A pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem, there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man. He looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until his eyes had set on Christ the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what the law required, he took Jesus into his arms and blessed God and said, now master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised because my eyes have seen the salvation, which you have

prepared for all the nations to see. A light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people, Israel. As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, you see this child? He is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel. Destined to be a sign that is rejected. And a sword will pierce your own soul too, so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare. There was a prophetess also, Anna, the daughter. Of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years, her days of girlhood over. She had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now 84 years old and never left the temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem. When they had done everything the law of the Lord required they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom and God's favor was with him. It is the Gospel of the Lord. Upon seeing the infant Jesus, Simeon exclaims, my eyes have seen the savior. Anna, looking on confirms Simeon's vision and offers thanks to God. On this first Sunday after the celebration of Christ's birth we gather to pray for the grace to see in His birth both the establishment of God's reign of peace and the possibility of its fulfillment in our lifetime. We pray for the grace of sight because God's gift of abundant, personal and social life is not self-evident. Either to those who are self-conscious or to those who watch the evening news. Indeed, if we are completely honest we might well confess that we gather to sing carols and retell the story, not because we see what Anna and Simeon saw. But because we wish we could. It is extremely difficult to maintain faith in the Gospel of God's presence and reign among us. We are nearing 2000 years of proclaiming the birth of a new humanity. And the establishment of God's reign in human history. For all these years, the faithful have waited and watched for war to end and peace to come. For inequality to end and justice to come. For estrangement to end and reconciliation to come. For oppression to end and freedom to come. For poverty, hunger, and sickness to end and health to come. For death to end and life to come. It is not easy to maintain faith in what never seems to come. It is difficult to keep trying to make the invisible, visible. Christmas is but four days passed, on that festival day the church represented the story of how God has entered into the poverty, brokenness, and incompleteness of our personal and social lives. Entered into them and transformed them. It was due to happen one day. For as Saint John reminds us 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 were made through Him. And without Him was not anything made. In Him was life and the life was the light of humanity. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth. And so with Saint John at Christ's mass, the church gives thanks for the mystery of the saving power of God in our lives and history. Gives thanks for a candle in the dark. Gives thanks for the birth of possibilities. It is no longer doubtful how our human drama will end. Indeed it is now certain that our human tragedy is a divine comedy. God has taken the lead in this play called history and God will speak the decisive word. And so on this Sunday following the celebration of the eternal coming of Christ, the church retells the story of Simeon and Anna and reminds us of Simeon's faithful words, which are to become this day, our words of faith. My eyes have seen the salvation which God has prepared for all to see. We gather as the faithful have gathered for generations to tell the story and pray for the gift of faith. We come because in the world that makes faith difficult, we want to be able to proclaim in word and example the good news of God in Christ. The world, of course, is not much better since that first Christmas. The larger part of humanity does not suffer less. Peace is no more within easy grasp. To say we can see it is to be vulnerable to the charge of madness. To what can we point? What can we say to our

children when children all over the world die of poverty, hunger, and war? While Christians worry about military preparedness. What can we say to the remnant of the Jews who survived the Holocaust in the land of Luther and Bach? What can we say to Japanese Buddhists who witnessed the fruits of a power developed and first used by those who call themselves Christians? Only Simeon and Anna have an adequate reply. The presence of salvation is a mystery. The mystery of a baby, a baby born to suffer and die. So that we might know the way to abundant life and world peace. At Christmas we celebrate the birth of possibility. Possibility manifested not in strength and independence. But in childlike weakness and dependence. Today's Gospel calls us to a rebirth of faith. Mary and Joseph bring Jesus their gift of new life as a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Old Simeon and Anna, who faithfully waited, prepared, and watched for God's revelation. See the baby Jesus and proclaim our eyes have seen God's saving power within our lives and history. And having seen it, they predict his suffering and death as the way to salvation. Today as the Duke Chapel celebrates the 200 year history of the founding of the Methodist Episcopal Church, our prayer is appropriate, the colic assigned by the Episcopal Church for the festival of John and Charles Wesley. Kindle in your church just fervor that those whose faith has cooled, may be warmed. And those who have not known Christ may turn to Him. Christian faith is a way of perceiving life in our lives. A way of being conscious to the world. A way of life, founded on the conviction that no matter how deep the world might fall, blessed are the eyes that see the mystery of a baby born to suffer and die as the way to salvation. In the Book of Common Prayer, the colic of this Sunday reads almighty God, you have poured upon us the light of your incarnate word. Grant that this light enkindled in our hearts may shine forth in our lives. If only we could see with the eyes of faith, we might be willing to give up our false notions that this is the best of all possible worlds. Give up our false notions that our life in this country is worth perpetuating and protecting at all cost. If only we could see with the eyes of faith, we might be willing to give up the false notion that the power of political, economic, and military might are the way to peace and justice. If only we could see with the eyes of faith, we might be willing to give up the false notion that it is our responsibility to make history come out right. It is difficult to see the divine child in the manger of poverty or the divine man on the cross of suffering. It is difficult to see that God conquers evil, only through the power of weakness. The power of non-violent resistance. To see that God establishes His reign of peace and justice through simple gestures of hospitality, feeding, compassion, reconciliation, caring, healing, and forgiving. Only the eyes of faith can make the invisible, visible. Only the eyes of faith can see through what the world calls reality to the truth. Only those who are willing to risk living as if faith were true, will ever know if it is. And so as we come to renew our covenant with God who comes to us in the mystery of a baby, and in the mystery of bread and wine, with Nicholas Herman, the 16th century Christian hymn writer in his Christmas tide eucharistic hymn put it that all together praise our God upon His lofty throne, for He uncloses heaven today and gives to us His son. Behold the wonderful exchange, our Lord with us doth make. Lo He assumes our flesh and blood, and we of heaven partake. Then let us come to this holy meal. Let us--