

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Wednesday, December 24th, 2025



Christmas Eve
7:00 pm

In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.

Prelude:

Carol Medley of traditional carols
I. Ding Dong Merrily on High
II. Angels We Have Heard on High
III. The First Noel
Thomas Haake, violin

CANDLE LIGHTING

We have watched; we have waited
in hope. *The first candle is lit.*

for peace. *The second candle is lit.*

in joy! *The third candle is lit.*

with love. *The fourth candle is lit.*

Now our redemption draws near! *The Christ candle (the center white candle) is lit.*

ENTRANCE HYMN OH, COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL ELW 283

Oh, come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!

Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem;

Come and behold him born the king of angels:

Refrain

Oh, come, let us adore him, oh, come, let us adore him,

Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

The highest, most holy, light of light eternal,

Born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;

Son of the Father now in flesh appearing! *Refrain*

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!

Glory to God in the highest: *Refrain*

CHRISTMAS DIALOG

P Jesus Christ is the Light of the world!

C **He is the Light no darkness can overcome.**

P At darkest night we gather to celebrate the great light of our salvation.

C **With the heavenly host we sing, "Glory to God in the highest heaven."**

P In Christ, God's Word is made flesh and lives among us.

C **With the shepherds, we will tell of the wonders we have seen and heard.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:2–7

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined.

³You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Anthem In the Bleak Midwinter arr. Mack Wilberg (b. 1955)

Anderson Rambler, bass-baritone

*In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan, Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow, in the bleak midwinter, long ago. Our God,
Heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain; Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes
to reign. In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.
What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; If I were a Wise
Man, I would do my part; Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.*

SECOND READING: Titus 2:11–14

¹¹For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹²training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



GOSPEL: Luke 2:1–14 [15–20]

The holy gospel according to Luke, the 2nd chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of

the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Rev. Mark Kreemer

HYMN: HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING ELW 270

1 Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king;
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled."
Joyful, all you nations, rise;
join the triumph of the skies;
with angelic hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain

Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king!"

- 2 Christ, by highest heav'n adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!
Hail, incarnate deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel! Refrain
- 3 Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace!
Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise each child of earth,
born to give us second birth. Refrain

CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,**

**the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Empowered by the news of Christ's birth, let us pray boldly for the church, creation, and all who are in need.

After each petition the following response is given:

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

ANTHEM: Mary Did You Know? arr. Jack Schrader (b. 1942)

Sydney Johnson, mezzo-soprano

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water? Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters? Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new? This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you. Mary, did you know that your baby boy will give sight to the blind man? Mary, did you know that your baby boy would calm a storm with His hand? Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod? And when you kiss your little baby, you've kissed the face of God? Mary, did you know? Oo, Mary, did you know? The blind will see; the deaf will hear; the dead will live again! the lame will leap; the dumb will speak the praises of the Lamb! Mary, did you know that your baby boy is the Lord of all creation? Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations? Did you know that your baby boy was heaven's perfect Lamb? And the sleeping Child you're holding is the Great I Am!

OFFERING

An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.

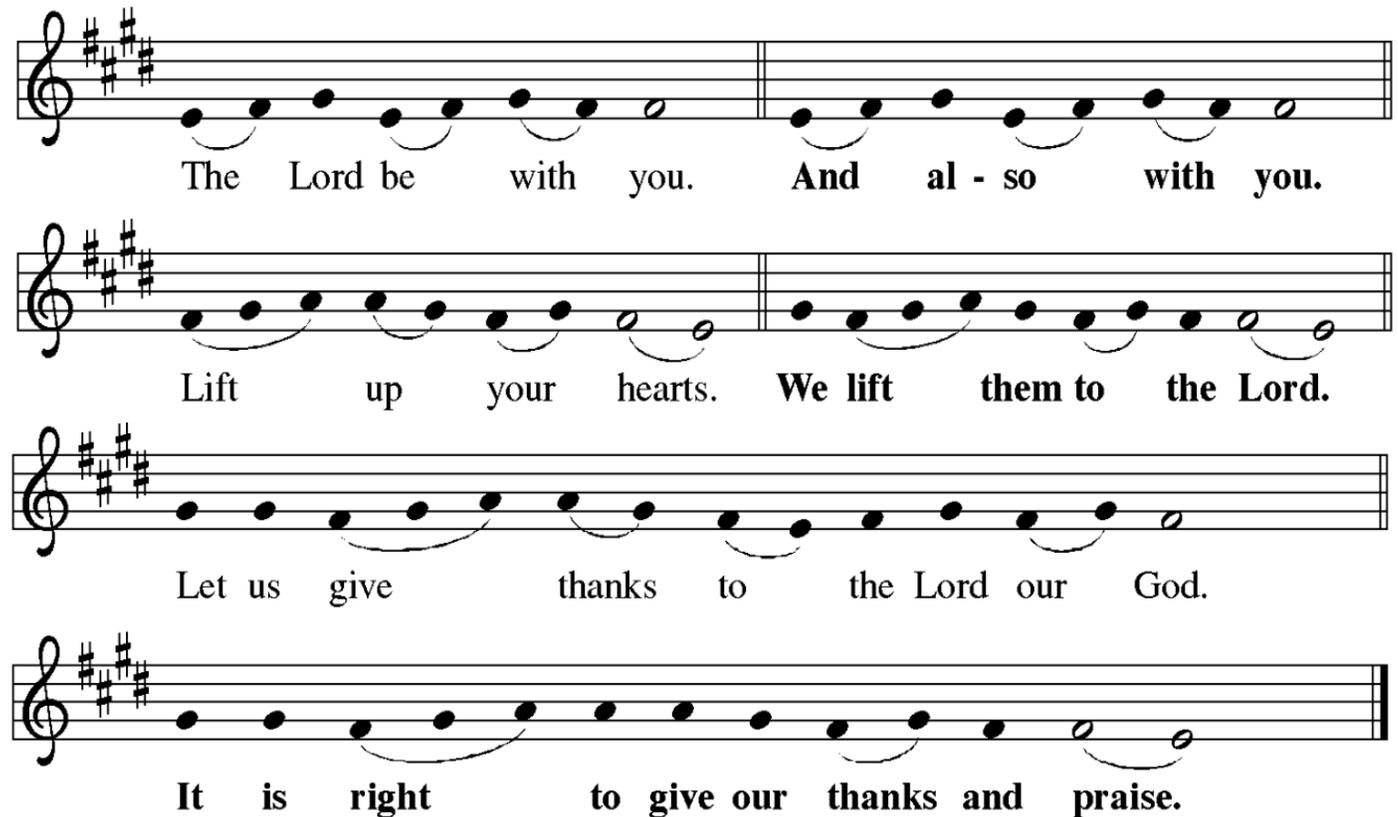
OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray.

God of glory, great are your wonders among us and many are the blessings you bestow. Use us and these your gifts for the needs of the world, that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in your saving grace, through Christ our Savior.

Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING



The image shows four staves of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The notes are quarter notes with stems pointing up, and they are grouped by slurs. The lyrics are written below the notes.

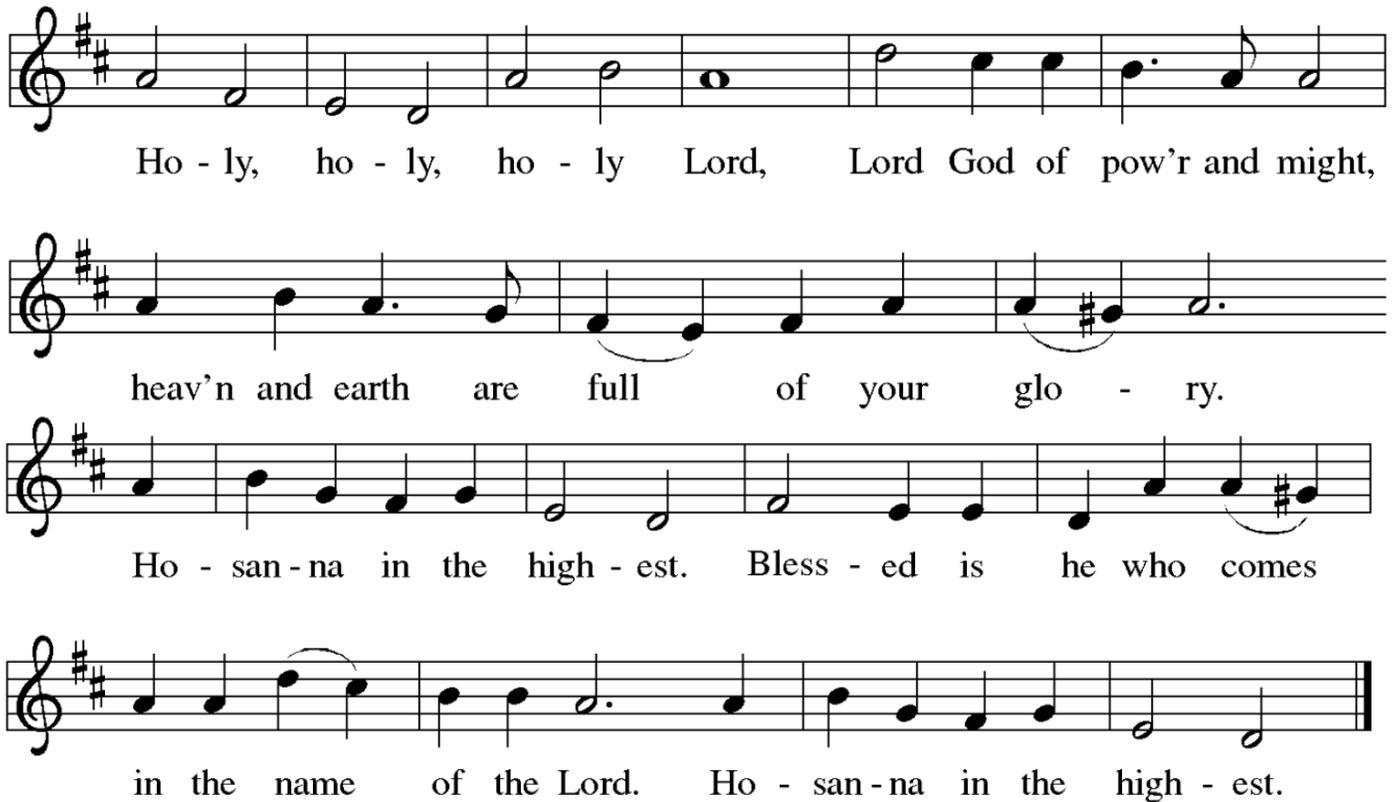
The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places.... And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,
 heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.
 Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes
 in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

Holy God, Creator of all and Source of life, at the birth of time your word brought light into the world.

In the fullness of time, you sent your Word, born of Mary, to shine in our darkness and to make us your daughters and sons.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his birth and life among us, his death and resurrection, we await his coming again when all things will be restored in him. By your Spirit bless us and this bread and cup, that, held and nourished by you, we may live as your children, shining with the light of your Son.

Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and forever. **Amen**

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Invitation to Communion

God is now in flesh appearing.
Come to the feast of joy!

COMMUNION WHAT CHILD IS THIS

ELW 296

- 1 What child is this, who, laid to rest,
 on Mary's lap is sleeping?
 Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
 while shepherds watch are keeping?
 This, this is Christ the king,
 whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
 haste, haste to bring him laud,
 the babe, the son of Mary!

- 2 Why lies he in such mean estate
 where ox and ass are feeding?
 Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
 the silent Word is pleading.
 Nails, spear shall pierce him through,
 the cross be borne for me, for you;
 hail, hail the Word made flesh,
 the babe, the son of Mary!

3 So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
 come, peasant, king, to own him.
 The King of kings salvation brings;
 let loving hearts enthrone him.
 Raise, raise the song on high,
 the virgin sings her lullaby;
 joy, joy, for Christ is born,
 the babe, the son of Mary!

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

May the body and blood of our lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

Incarnate God, you are among us at this table. May we treasure this gift and ponder in our hearts the mystery of your presence. Move us to discover the wonders of your love in the everyday moments of our lives, through Christ born in us.

Amen.

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

On this Christmas Eve we remember God's promise to our world:
Christ, our Light and our Hope, will come. Listen to the words of Isaiah the prophet:

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who lived in a land as dark as death a light has dawned. You have increased their joy and given them gladness; they rejoice in your presence as those who rejoice at harvest, as warriors exult when dividing spoil. (Isaiah 9:2-3)

Let us pray

O God, rejoicing, we remember the promise of your Son. As the light from this candle, may the blessing of Christ come upon us, brightening our way and guiding us by his truth. May Christ our Savior bring life into the darkness of our world, and to us, as we wait for his coming. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Solo

O Holy Night
Mr. Rambler

Adolphe Adam (1803-1856)

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 appeared and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn! Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices! O night divine! O night when Christ was born! O night divine! O night, O 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. Christ is the Lord! O praise His name forever! His pow'r and glory evermore proclaim! His pow'r and glory evermore proclaim!

CONGREGATIONAL SONG SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT! ELW 281

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.

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heav'nly hosts sing, alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from your holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

BLESSING

The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus, the Word made flesh.
Amen.

SENDING SONG

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

ELW 290

Refrain

Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and ev'rywhere;
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. *Refrain*
- 2 The shepherds feared and trembled
when, lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain*
- 3 Down in a lonely manger
the humble Christ was born;
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain*

African American spiritual, refrain; John W. Work Jr., 1872-1925, stanzas, alt.

DISMISSAL

Glory to God in the highest!
And peace to God's people on earth!

Postlude

Carillon on ANTIOCH

Mary Beth Bennett (b. 1954)

Thank you to those serving today:

Presiding Minister	Rev. Mark Kreemer
Director of Music	Dr. Abigail Haake
Assisting Minister	7 pm Karl Kalk 10:30 pm Scott Larson
Communion Assistants	7 pm Kathryn Myers & Barb Palmer 10:30 pm Kathryn Myers & Sue Reid
Ushers	7 pm Craig Maurer & Gary Collard 10:30 pm Tracie Schmolt, Greg Klein, Dan Farrar, & Gary Collard
Lector	Sydney Johnson
Sacristan	Kathryn Myers
Soundboard	7 pm Tracie Schmolt 10:30 pm Jim Johnson
Video/Live-Stream	John Stanko



Images in the Readings

Luke's gospel presents images of **the poor**: those oppressed by Roman government, women giving birth in a place that houses both people and barn animals, newborns wrapped only in strips of cloth, the socially despised and religiously unclean shepherds. In our society where Christmas suggests unrestricted spending and continual feasting, Luke's image of the poor is striking.

Both the gospel and the first reading suggest the image of the **mother** bearing new life. Often in the Bible, childbirth is credited to God's power. All Christians are now Mary, bearing Christ for the world.

The Hebrew word **Bethlehem** means house of bread. From this historic city famous for its connection to King David comes the one who will feed the people forever. In the liturgy, we enter that house of bread and eat.

Cathedral Concert Series

Sunday, February 22, 4:00 PM



**Dr. Emery Stephens, Jr., baritone, Associate Professor of Voice,
Studies. Olaf College**

with

**Dr. Thomas Bandy, collaborative piano, Associate Professor of Vocal
Accompanying, Oberlin College**

and

Trevor Kazarian, cello

Presenting music of Harry T. Burleigh, H. Leslie Adams, Hall Johnson, Kurt Weill, Florence B. Price, Leonard Bernstein, Dorothy Rudd Moore, G. F. Handel, and Rosephanye Powell.

The Boston Phoenix praised baritone Emery Stephens for singing "with ringing suavity and articulate intelligence." His performances include collaborations with the Boston Art Song Society, Bridge Chamber Music Festival, Handel & Haydn Society, Abridged Opera of Ontario, Wilmington Symphony, Arbor Opera Theater, Michigan Philharmonic, Ann Arbor Symphony, Boston Lyric Opera, Opera New England, and the Detroit Jazz Festival. Notably, he participated in a revival of Dave Brubeck's *The Gates of Justice*, sponsored by the Detroit Jazz Festival, alongside jazz pianist Jason Moran and his trio, *The Bandwagon*.

His research on Black composers' works and their place in the classical canon for voice teachers and students appears in the *Journal of Singing*, *Music Teachers National Association Journal*, the *Scholarship of Multicultural Teaching and Learning*, and as a contributing author of *So You Want to Sing Spirituals* by Randye Jones, and a book *Singing Down the Barriers: A Guide to Centering African American Song for Concert Performers* with co-author Caroline Helton. He also served as a lecturer, vocal coach, and recital curator for the MN Duo Program in 2025.

Dr. Stephens grew up in Boston, holds a B.A. from Gordon College, an M.M. from Boston University, and a D.M.A. from the University of Michigan. He studied vocal techniques with Lisa Popeil and taught at universities in North Carolina, Michigan, and Arkansas. He is a member of the National Association of Teachers of Singing and the College Music Society.

CONCERTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO ALL. YOUR FREEWILL OFFERING IS GRACIOUSLY RECEIVED.

