

Christmas Eve
Sunday, December 24, 2023 – 4:00 p.m.



Welcome!

To our guests and visitors:

We are glad that you are here with us today!
If you have no church home, why don't you consider joining us? Please speak to Pastor Parrish after the service and enjoy a special gift for visiting with us today!

Entrance Hymn: O Come, Little Children

1. Oh, come, little children, oh, come, one and all;
To Bethlehem haste to the manger so small.
God's Son for a gift has been sent you this night
To be your Redeemer, your Joy and Delight.
2. He's born in a stable for you and for me,
Draw near by the bright gleaming starlight to see,
In swaddling clothes lying, so meek and so mild,
And purer than angels, the heavenly Child.
3. See, Mary and Joseph with love-beaming eyes
Are gazing upon the rude bed where He lies.
The shepherds are kneeling, with hearts full of love,
While angels sing loud hallelujahs above.
4. Kneel down and adore Him with shepherds today;
Lift up little hands now and praise Him as they;
Rejoice that a Savior from sin you can boast,
And join in the song of the heavenly host.

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: In the beginning was the Word,

C: **And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

P: All things were made by him,

C: **And without him nothing was made.**

P: In him was life,

C: **And that life was the light of men.**

P: The light shines in the darkness,
C: **But the darkness has not overcome it.**

P: The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
C: **We have seen his glory,**

P: The glory of the one and only Son of the Father,
C: **Full of grace and truth!**

P: We worship on this holy night in the name of our heavenly Father:
C: **Who sent his Son to become flesh and dwell among us.**

P: We call upon Jesus, the only Son of the Father:
C: **Who is our Savior and our Lord.**

P: We pray for the Holy Spirit's presence and power,
C: **So we may see Christ's glory,**

P: The glory of the one and only Son of the Father,
C: **Full of grace and truth!**

P: The Lord be with you.
C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us pray:
Heavenly Father, may the birth of Jesus—announced by the angels, witnessed by the shepherds and marveled at by the magi—empower us on this holy night to rejoice; indeed, to *rejoice evermore*; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C: **Amen.**

1. Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth:
Ye who sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth.

Refrain:
Come and worship, come and worship;
Worship Christ, the newborn King.
2. Shepherds in the field abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
Yonder shines His Infant Light. [Refrain]
3. Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations,
Ye have seen His natal star. [Refrain]
4. Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In His temple shall appear. [Refrain]
5. All creation, join in praising
God the Father, Spirit, Son.
Evermore your voices raising
To the eternal Three in One. [Refrain]

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 9:2-7

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. ³ You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. ⁴ For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. ⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

The Epistle Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

READING Luke 2:1–5

Pastor: In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

Pastor: Although “O Little Town of Bethlehem” is an American carol, written by the Reverend Phillips Brooks of Pennsylvania in 1865, it was inspired by his visiting the actual town where Jesus was born in what we call the Holy Land. On this holy evening, we all go in heart and mind to that little town that became so special in God’s plan of salvation.

HYMN

O Little Town of Bethlehem

LSB 361

1. O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.
2. For Christ is born of Mary,
And, gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wond’ring love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King
And peace to all the earth!

3. How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin.
Where meek souls will receive Him, still
The dear Christ enters in.

4. 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 Immanuel!

READING *Luke 2:6–7*

Pastor: And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Pastor: The carol “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly” is a translation of a Polish Christmas song that appeared in its original language in a song collection in 1838. As with many traditional folk songs, the text author and musical composer are not known. An adaptation in the American version we sing is the repetition of the last phrase of each stanza: “Christ the child is Lord of all!” and “Christ the child was born for you!”—both lines are certainly worthy of being repeated!

1. Infant holy, Infant lowly,
For His bed a cattle stall;
Oxen lowing,
Little knowing
Christ the child is Lord of all.
Swiftly winging,
Angels singing,
Bells are ringing,
Tidings bringing:
Christ the child is Lord of all!
Christ the child is Lord of all!

2. Flocks were sleeping,
Shepherds keeping
Vigil till the morning new
Saw the glory,
Heard the story,
Tidings of a Gospel true.
Thus rejoicing,
Free from sorrow,
Praises voicing,
Greet the morrow:
Christ the child was born for you!
Christ the child was born for you!

READING *Luke 2:8–12*

Pastor: And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

Pastor: Although “Away in a Manger” may sound like an “Old World” carol, its first Lutheran Church appearance was in a Lutheran Sunday School hymnal in Philadelphia published in the year 1885. Reminding us that there was no room in the inn and that our Savior was humbly born, the text was not translated into German until 1934. Now sung around the world, the text concludes in the third stanza with a prayer that has been memorized by countless generations of children.

Hymn

Away in a Manger

LSB 365

1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
2. The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.
3. Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And take us to heaven to live with Thee there.

READING *Luke 2:13–16*

Pastor: And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!” When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.

Pastor: Echoing the song of the angels is a joy for God’s people—especially on Christmas Eve. A traditional French carol gives us the opportunity to sing “Glory to God in the highest” in Latin, as “Gloria in excelsis Deo.” The words and the melody of this Christmas carol, both from France, bring a bright excitement to our celebration as we bring to our God limitless praise.

HYMN

Angels We Have Heard on High

LSB 368

1. Angels we have heard on high, Sweetly singing o’er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, Echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.
2. Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be Which inspire your heav’nly song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.
3. Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn king.
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.

READING *Luke 2:17–20*

Pastor: And when [the shepherds] saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Pastor: Luke writes that Mary “treasured up all these things” in her heart. We are invited to do as Mary did, to treasure these things—including our worship with the joyous carols—in our hearts. Through these songs, we share the joy of sisters and brothers around the globe who join in praising Jesus Christ, our newborn King. With repeating alleluias, we give voice to our joy in the words and the music of a Bohemian carol from over five hundred years ago.

1. Let our gladness have no end, alleluia!
For to earth did Christ descend, alleluia!

Refrain:

On this day God gave us
Christ, His Son, to save us;
Christ, His Son to save us.

2. Prophesied in days of old, alleluia!
God has sent Him as foretold, alleluia! [Refrain]
3. See, the loveliest blooming rose, alleluia!
From the branch of Jesse grows, alleluia! [Refrain]
4. Into flesh is made the Word, alleluia!
He, our refuge and our Lord, alleluia! [Refrain]

Sermon

Rejoice Evermore

1 Thessalonians 5:16

Prayers

Pastor: Let us pray for God's great mercy, asking that He would hear our petitions and grant them according to His gracious will.

Almighty and everlasting God, as we recall the first Christmas, we thank You for the gift of Jesus Christ, who came to earth in deep humility. We bless You that there was room in Your heart for the people of earth and for the sacrifice of Jesus as He left the glory of Your eternal kingdom in coming to earth to be our Savior, our Brother and our Friend. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: hear our prayer.

Pastor: As we think of Your chosen servants Mary and Joseph, we thank You for the gift of family. Grant that we always treasure the gifts we receive through them and seek to be those who cherish our family, our church family, our friends, and our neighbors. Lord, in Your mercy,
People: hear our prayer.

Pastor: As we fill this sacred space with song, we thank You for the gifts of poetry and music and for writers and composers who have enriched our celebration with their devotion and creativity. Grant that we ever seek to bring You all that is the best and most beautiful in our worship. Lord, in Your mercy,
People: hear our prayer.

Pastor: As we hear again of the shepherds to whom the angel brought the greatest of news, we thank You for those who serve in the various vocations of life, including those whose daily work goes unnoticed or underappreciated. We commend to Your special care, Lord, those in the military, our first responders and medical personnel, and all whose service keeps them distanced from their family homes in these days. Lord, in Your mercy,
People: hear our prayer.

Pastor: We pray for all situations and conditions of people, especially those on our hearts at this time. Be with all who need our petitions and our concern. Bless them according to their needs, Lord, and give us opportunities to be of comfort and assistance in Your name. Lord, in Your mercy,
People: hear our prayer.

Pastor: As we pray, gracious God, we remember our dear ones who have completed their earthly lives and now are in Your eternal keeping. Grant that we follow their footsteps in ways of peace and love throughout our lives as we live to Your glory as those on whom Your favor rests. Lord, in Your mercy,
People: hear our prayer.

Pastor: These and any other things You would have us ask of You, heavenly Father, grant to us for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

Confession and Absolution

P: Lord Jesus, we praise you for this opportunity to celebrate your birth. Yet we must confess to you that much of the newness has worn off. The angels' message has grown old in our hearts, and your birth has become more of a sentimental tradition for us to observe rather than a life-changing reality for us and all people.

C: **And Lord, we are hurting because of it. Our hearts feel empty and alone. Our spirits remain restless and unsatisfied despite the abundance of our possessions. Our souls are weighed down by nagging guilt, feelings of inadequacy and haunting fears. Lord, we need to be assured of your love. We need to know your forgiveness. We need to experience the peace, the power, and the joy of Christ Jesus.**

P: God has heard our prayer and he answers it with the same message he has been announcing for over two-thousand years: "*Unto you is born a Savior; he is Christ the Lord.*" (Luke 2:11) Dear friends, this was not just his message to the shepherds then; it is God's message to us here, now, tonight. And so as a called and ordained servant of the Word, I forgive you all of your sins; in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **We have seen his glory,**

P: The glory of the one and only Son of the Father,

C: **Full of grace and truth!**

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

The Words of Our Lord

Pastor: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My ✠ body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My ✠ blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Pax Domini

pg 163

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.
C Amen.

Agnus Dei

pg 163

C Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; grant us peace.

Distribution Hymns

As Each Happy Christmas

1. As each happy Christmas Dawns on earth again,
Comes the holy Christ Child To the hearts of men.
2. Enters with His blessing Into ev'ry home,
Guides and guards our footsteps As we go and come.
3. All unknown, beside me He will ever stand
And will safely lead me With His own right hand.

In a Little Stable

- 1 In a little stable Far across the sea
 Was a little Baby Just like you and me.
- 2 Not a bed or cradle, Not a pillow deep,
 But a lowly manger Was His place to sleep
- 3 Shepherds stood around Him, Angels watched with care,
 For this Babe was Jesus, Lying smiling there.
- 4 Oh, I love this Jesus, Who was little then,
 For He surely loves me, Little though I am.

On Christmas Night All Christians Sing LSB 377

On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring,
On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring,
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful King's birth.

Then why should men on earth be so sad,
Since our Redeemer made us glad,
Then why should men on earth be so sad,
Since our Redeemer made us glad,
When from our sin He set us free,
All for to gain our liberty?

When sin departs before His grace,
Then life and health come in its place,
When sin departs before His grace,
Then life and health come in its place;
Angels and men with joy may sing,
All for to see the newborn King.

All out of darkness we have light,
Which made the angels sing this night,
All out of darkness we have light,
Which made the angels sing this night:
"Glory to God and peace to men
Now and forevermore. Amen."

Post-Communion Collect

Pastor: Let us pray.
Gracious God, our heavenly Father, You have given us a foretaste of the feast to come in the Holy Supper of Your Son's body and blood. Keep us firm in the true faith throughout our days of pilgrimage that, on the day of His coming, we may, together with all Your saints, celebrate the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom which has no end; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: **Amen.**

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

As we light our candles, we remember and worship our Savior, Jesus Christ, God's Light of love and forgiveness to the world.

P: "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you." (Isaiah 60:1) When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth" (Ephesians 5:8-9). "In the same way, let your light shine before people, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

1. 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.

2. 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!

3. Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

BENEDICTION

- P:** May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi and the peace of the Christ Child. May the spirit of Christmas fill your hearts and your homes all year long. And may the Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless you now and forevermore!
- C:** **Amen.**

RECESSIONAL HYMN
Go Tell It On The Mountain

LSB 388

- ref** 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 blessèd Christmas morn. **Refrain.**