



THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD CHRISTMAS EVE

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

*A very merry Christmas to all who come
to worship the Christ Child.*



On a long winter evening we gather to proclaim the coming of the light. Isaiah announces that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Paul reminds us that the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all. In the familiar account of Christ's birth, the evening sky is bright with the heavenly host singing, "Glory to God in the highest." Amid our broken world we proclaim that the prince of peace is born among us.

In our worship this Christmas Eve, we join with Christians throughout the world to celebrate the great mystery of our faith: God speaks to us in our words so that we might know God's mercy; God comes to us in human flesh—in Christ's body and blood—so that we might share in God's unfailing love.

As with so many things this year, our worship will be a bit different. While we know that group singing can spread the virus, we also could not imagine Christmas Eve without music. So, we are asking that if you choose to sing, please do so very quietly. And please keep your responses equally quiet. After all, a baby has just been born.

PROCLAMATION OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

The lights are low, and the pastor reads a proclamation which has been in use in the church for 1500 years. It places the birth of Christ in a specific time and place in the history of the world.

ENTRANCE HYMN *Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful*

Those who are able, please stand and face the cross as it processes.

1. *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!

4. Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be glory given!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing: *Refrain.*

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

- P. Blessed be the Holy One of Israel, the Word made flesh, the Power of the Most High,
✠ one God, now and forever.
C. **Amen.**
P. Gathered in the name of Jesus, let us confess our sin against God and our neighbor.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

- P. Gracious God,
C. **in Christ Jesus You come among us as light shining in darkness. We confess our failure to welcome Your light. Forgive us and renew our hope, so that we may live in the light of Your grace, and open us to the peace of Christ dwelling in and among us. Amen.**
P. God's love has appeared, born in a stable, our Savior, Christ the Lord. By His authority, I declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sin, in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
C. **Amen.**

GREETING

- P. Good news of great joy, light and life, grace and peace be with you all.
C. **And also with you.**

HYMN OF PRAISE

1. Let all together praise our God before His glorious throne;
Today He opens heav'n again to give us His own Son, To give us His own Son.
2. He undertakes a great exchange, puts on our human frame;
And in return gives us His realm, His glory, and His name, His glory and His name.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P. Let us pray. Almighty God, You have 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 only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C. Amen.

Congregation may be seated.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:2-7

This poem promises deliverance from oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Israel's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!

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

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

C. Thanks be to God.

PSALM 98 *Joy to the World*

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive its King:
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room and heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.
4. He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love, and wonders, wonders of His love.

SECOND READING: Titus 2:11-14

The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. In the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He 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

C. Thanks be to God.

Those who are able, please stand.

HOLY GOSPEL: St. Luke 2:1-20

God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.

P. The Holy Gospel according the St. Luke, the second chapter.

C. Glory to You, O Lord.

In those days a decree went out from the Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And 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.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among all people, whom He favors!"

When 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” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

P. The Gospel of the Lord
C. Praise to You, O Christ.

Congregation may be seated.

SERMON

Those who are able, please stand.

HYMN OF THE DAY *What Child is This*

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!

THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through Him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
He came down from heaven:

by the power of the Holy Spirit
He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.
For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day He rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
The giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Filled with joy at the birth of the One sent to save us, let us offer our prayers to God Who gives us peace and hope.

A brief silence.

Mighty and merciful God, we praise You for bringing Your Word to birth among us. Strengthen with Your Spirit all the baptized, so that even where the faithful cannot assemble for worship, the whole church can together honor the birth of Jesus. Lord, in Your mercy,
C. **hear our prayer.**

We praise You for Your creation. Give respite to flocks, fields, and those who tend them. Come near to us in the beauty of nighttime, the shining of the stars, and the hush of a world at rest. May our wonder at Your creation rouse our care for all the earth. Lord, in Your mercy,
C. **hear our prayer.**

We praise You for each day that knows peace and welcomes justice. Inspire leaders of nations to seek concord where there is war and violence. Guard ambassadors, relief workers, and military personnel the world over. Make our own streets avenues of peace. Lord, in Your mercy,
C. **hear our prayer.**

We praise You for new parents with their newborns and for the joys of families of every shape and size. Comfort those who long for children, especially those losing hope. Visit the homes where there is sickness or sorrow. Abide with people who live isolated from others. Bless the children who receive no gifts this year. Lord, in Your mercy,
C. hear our prayer.

We praise You for every sign of Your loving presence. Bring rest and reassurance to those facing struggle this night. Shelter travelers, refugees, and those without homes. Console those who lie awake due to pain, anxiety or grief. Bring Your healing to all who are in need. We pray especially for Merv, Emily, Angie, Shirlee, Lynette, Bill and Karen Pohlen, Bill Ningen, Gail, Tom, Carol, Dick and Jim. Lord, in Your mercy,
C. hear our prayer.

We praise You for the development of coronavirus vaccines. We pray for the millions who are afflicted with Covid-19. Uphold physicians, nurses, and all health care workers, and provide medical facilities for everyone. Lord, in Your mercy,
C. hear our prayer.

We praise You for all the saints who have proclaimed Your glory in word and deed, especially those we remember in our hearts. With them, let us sing Your praise, now and forever. Lord, in Your mercy,
C. hear our prayer.

To You, Mighty God, Prince of peace, wonderful Counselor, we offer our praises for Your grace upon grace. Receive our prayers in the name of the one who was born to live and die and rise again for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
C. Amen.

SHARING THE PEACE

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

*All greet one another in the name of the Lord, saying, "Peace be with you."
The congregation may be seated.*

OFFERTORY PRAYER

P. Good and loving God,
C. we rejoice in the birth of Jesus, Who came among the poor to bring the riches of Your grace. Bless the gifts we offer, and let them be a blessing for others. With the trees of the field, with all earth and heaven, we rejoice at the coming of Your Son.
Amen

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

- P. The Lord be with you.
C. **And also with you.**
P. Lift up your hearts.
C. **We lift them to the Lord.**
P. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
C. **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

- P. Holy God, Creator of all ... and daughters.
C. **Amen.**
P. In the night ... will be restored in Him.
C. **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**
P. By Your Spirit ... both now and forever.
C. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

- P. Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us
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.

All baptized Christians who wish to receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are welcome. Follow the directions of the ushers. After you receive the bread, please proceed to the tray with the covered cups and take one. Remember to keep six feet of distance between your family and the next!

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

- P. Great and gracious God, we thank You that in this holy meal the true Light has come to dwell in us. As we return into the world You love, may we take to all people the good news of Jesus Christ, in Whose name we pray.
C. **Amen**

The Ushers will hold lit candles at the end of each row before the reading of the Gospel. Please hold your lit candle upright and tilt the unlit candle to light.

SERVICE OF LIGHT

THE GOSPEL OF THE INCARNATION St. John 1:1-14

THE HYMN OF CHRISTMAS EVE *Silent Night*

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 Your holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Your birth. Jesus, Lord, at Your birth.

BENEDICTION

P. May Christ, born into time to bring endless peace, guide your days and years in righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. Holy Incarnate Majesty, Holy Incarnate Word, Holy Abiding Spirit, Father, + Son and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever.

C. Amen

RECESSIONAL HYMN *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

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!"

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.*

DISMISSAL

- P. Go in peace. Share the good news.
C. **Thanks be to God!**

POSTLUDE

Those who Serve.

Ministers. All the People of God **Presiding.** Pastor Munter
Organist. Terry Dybsetter **Reader.** Linda Bruns/Dan Dybsetter
Camera: Josh Sumption **Projection:** James Kamrath/Kendon Knutson

How to reach us.

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Merv Anderson, Emily Morton, Angie Denelsbeck Anderson
Shirlee Gabbert, Lynette Christie, Bill and Karen Pohlen
Bill Ningen, Gail Sumption, Tom Gawerecki, Carol Moon,
Dick Anderson, Jim Moeller

December 20, 2020

General: \$1,851.55 (\$479.50 received through eGiving)
Savings: \$20.00 for Organ.

We ask that you take your candles home with you following worship and use them tomorrow, Christmas Day, as you continue your celebration of Christ's birth at home.



There will not be "kid's time" on Sunday, December 27th. We will resume "kid's time" on Sunday January 3rd.