

THE GRACE OF GOD HAS APPEARED



BRINGING SALVATION TO ALL

St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church

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The Nativity of Our Lord

December 24, 2024

Welcome! Arise, shine, for your light has come. Those walking in the darkness have seen a great light. Isaiah shares these words of hope with us. We know what it means to live in the darkness. But we don't live without hope. Tonight we celebrate that hope, given birth in Jesus the Christ. For to us a child is born. In Him is life and the life is the light of men.

Welcome guests! We are delighted you are with us for worship this evening. Please introduce yourself to Pastor Jon, sign the guest book next to the front doors, and let us know how we can be of service to you. The order of service is printed in this bulletin starting on page 2. A cryroom is available at the back left of the sanctuary for families with young children if there is a need.

Communion Note: We believe that our Lord gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but his very body and blood to eat and drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with him and with one another. Our Lord invites to his table those who trust his words, repent of all sin, and set aside any refusal to forgive and love as he forgives and loves us. Because unworthy reception of the sacrament can be harmful, those who are not yet instructed, are uncertain or doubtful, or hold to a different confession should speak to the pastor before participating.

Welcome to our Christmas Eve service!

**Please be sure to bring a candle as you come into the sanctuary*



Prelude: "Noel" – L. D'Aquin

Special Music: O Holy Night (5:00 pm) Stephen deDufour
Bethlehem (7:00 pm) Hope Dunbar

(Please stand and face the processional cross in the rear as we begin our worship with the responses in your bulletin)

Invitation to Worship

- P: Beloved in Christ, we are gathered together on this Eve of Christmas to prepare our hearts for the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ; to meditate upon the mystery of that Incarnation by which our nature is redeemed, and to receive with joy the message of our salvation.
- C: Drop down, O heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. Let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation.**
(Isaiah 45:8)
- P: Let us pray: Almighty God, You have given Your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and to be born of a virgin. Grant that we, who have been born again and made Your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom with You and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and forever.
- C: Amen**

Processional Hymn: 380 Hark, the Herald Angels Sing

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

Christ by highest heav'n adored Christ, the everlasting Lord
Late in time behold him come, Offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see! Hail, incarnate deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the Newborn king!"

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
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the Newborn King!"

Confession and Absolution: *(read responsively as indicated)*

- P: O God, You search us out and know us, and all that we are is open to You.
We confess to You our sins and our need for a Savior.
- C: In Your mercy, Lord, forgive us and heal us.**
- P: When we make no room for Christ, and fail to welcome Him into our lives,
- C: In Your mercy, Lord, forgive us and heal us.**
- P: When we sanitize Your birthplace and erase from memory
the poor and displaced,
- C: In Your mercy, Lord, forgive us and heal us.**
- P: When we sing sweet sentiments over Christ's birth, and fail to rejoice over
His everyday presence,
- C: In Your mercy, Lord, forgive us and heal us.**
- P: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you, and for His
sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ,
and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the
Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C: Amen**

Gloria in Excelsis 947 (v 1,3)

All glory be to God on high And thanks for all His favor;
No harm can touch or terrify A child of God forever.
God shows His good and gracious will And grants His peace,
the world to fill – All strife at last has ended.

O Jesus Christ, the only Son Begotten of the Father,
Your saving death has made us one With God and with each other.
O Lamb of God, to You on high In our distress we sinners cry,
Have mercy on us, amen!

Prayer of the Day

- P: The Lord be with you.
- C: And also with you.**
- P: Let us pray.
O God, You make this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the
true Light. Grant that we who have known the mystery of that Light on
earth may also come to the fullness of His joys in heaven; through Jesus
Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one
God, now and forever.
- C: Amen.**

(please be seated)

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

- ² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.
- ³ You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
- ⁴ For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.
- ⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.
- ⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Special Music: “Who Has Known”

St. Peter Choir

Epistle Reading: Titus 2:11-14

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

(please stand)

Gradual Hymn: 386 Now Sing We, Now Rejoice (v 1,4)

Now sing we, now rejoice, Now raise to heav'n our voice;
He from whom joy streameth Poor in a manger lies;
Not so brightly beameth The sun in yonder skies.
Thou my Savior art! Thou my Savior art!

Oh, where shall joy be found? Where but on heav'nly ground?
Where the angels singing With all His saints unite,
Sweetest praises bringing In heav'nly joy and light.
Oh, that we were there! Oh, that we were there!

Gospel Reading: Lukje 2:1-20

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

C: **(sung) Glory be to You, O Lord.**

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ 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, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ 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.

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: **(sung) Praise be to You, O Christ.**

(please be seated)



Sermon Hymn: 366 It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

It came upon the midnight clear, That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth To touch their harps of gold;
“Peace on the earth, good-will to all, From heav’n’s all-gracious king.”
The world in solemn stillness lay To the angels sing.

Still through the clove skies the come With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heav’nly music floats O’er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lowly plains They bend on hov’ring wing,
And ever o’er its babel sounds The blessed angels sing.

All you, beneath your heavy load, By care and guilt laid low
Who toil along a dreary way With painful steps and slow;
Look up, for golden is the hour, Come swiftly on the wing,
The Prince was born to bring you peace; Of Him the angels sing.

For lo, the days have come to pass By prophets seen of old,
When down into the circling years Came Christ, as was foretold.
His word of peace shall to the earth God’s ancient promise bring,
And all who take this gift will hear The song the angels sing.

Christmas Sermon

Offertory

Instrumental Offertory: “In Dulci Jublio” - J.G. Walther

(please stand)

Order of Holy Communion

Preface

P: The shepherds believed the angelic announcement and went to find their Savior.

C: We have also heard the Good News and seek our Lord.

P: They found their Savior, the long-promised Messiah, in a stable's manger.

C: And we shall receive Him under bread and wine.

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 Him thanks and praise.

Great Thanksgiving

P: Thanks and praise be to you, our Father, almighty Creator, merciful Lord, God of promise and fulfillment. Of old Your faithful people waited for the day of Your visitation, manifest at last when the time had fully come and You sent forth Jesus Christ, your Son. Having seen His glory, we now wait for the day of consummation, when He will come again as both Judge and King. And so, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise Your name and join their unending hymn singing:

Sanctus (tune to Hark the Herald Angels Sing)

Holy, holy, holy Lord! God of host by all adored!

Heav'n and earth cannot contain All the glory of your name!

Hail, hosanna, God most high! Blest is he who now draws nigh

In the name of God the King! Hallelujahs glad we sing:

Hail, hosanna! Praises due Be forever, Lord, to you!

Lord's Prayer

P: Now in the words of our Lord we are bold to pray

C: Our Father who art in heaven...

Words of Institution

P: Our Lord Jesus Christ on the night he was betrayed...

(please be seated)

The Distribution and Distribution Hymns:

376 Once in Royal David’s City

364 Away in a Manger

383 A Great and Mighty Wonder

(please stand)



Sharing of the Christmas Light and Greeting

Please observe these precautions for our safety.

1. Do not tip a lighted candle when sharing the light.
2. After extinguishing the candle, allow the wax to harden before setting it down.
3. Parents please give close supervision to your children.

As the candlelight, which represents the good news that a Savior has been born, is passed from one to another, those giving light will say, "The Lord be with you" and the person receiving the light in turn responds, "and also with you." Each person then shares the light with his/her neighbor until every worshiper's candle has been lit.

Gospel of the Incarnation: John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.



Silent Night

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!

* * * *The Christmas Prayers* * * *

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.

(Please extinguish your candle)

Benediction

Recessional Hymn: 387 Joy to the World

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing, And heav'n, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sin and sorrow grow Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found, Far as, far as the curse is found.

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.

Postlude