

The Nativity of Our Lord
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service



December 24, 2022
7:30 PM

NOTES ON TONIGHT'S WORSHIP

As you enter, you join with those who have worshipped the Savior on Christmas Eve throughout the last 2000 years. You are encouraged to listen to the music letting it touch your heart, open your mind, prepare your spirit, and sing out the ancient carols of Christmas in praise of your Savior's birth upon this earth. This particular worship service invites us to ponder the wonder and significance of this holy night so long ago and worship our Savior personally with all of our heart, mind, strength and soul.

WE LOVE CHILDREN! We have a staffed **nursery** for infants through age 3, out the double doors of the sanctuary by lectern (front left) and from patio on right, **next to Trinity Hall**. Your children are always welcome to remain with you for the service or with the attendant in the nursery. If you are unfamiliar with Grace Lutheran Church, an usher will be happy to direct you.

Offerings: Offering plates are located in the Narthex as you enter and up front before the altar steps. Please place offerings and communication or prayer request cards in the offering places before or after service begins. Envelopes for confidential giving are located in the pews.

Candles: Real fire! When lights are passed from candle to candle during the singing of Silent Night, remember to never tip a burning candle—only the unlit candle should be tipped to receive the flame. After singing, please gently extinguish candles for a time of silence.

To think about—Who would have thought that Almighty God would come down to us—born as a tiny babe in a forgotten town and laid in an animal's manger? That baby, that Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is here tonight. Meet Him as He comes to you in worship through His Holy Word.

A Prayer Before Worship on Christmas Eve

God our Father, on this night You sent Your Son into our broken world as a vulnerable infant. Angels glorified You and shepherds rejoiced in Your coming. Draw us together to rejoice tonight in the salvation You graciously offer us through a child born in a manger. Bring us like the angels to sing Your glory, like the shepherds to tell it on the mountains, and like Mary to keep pondering the wonder of it all; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Nativity of Our Lord

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Tonight's Pre-Service Music for the Holy Night

"Christmas Hymn Medley"

(Organ - Kathy Schelp)

"Angels from the Realms of Glory, Gavotte, Canon in D"

(Keyboard - Kathy Schelp)

J. S. Bach, J. Pachelbel

"Savior of the Nations Come"

(Saxophone - Jon Peterson, Keyboard - Sandy Hulse)

arr. Andreas Kneller

"The Birthday of a King"

(Vocal Solo - Roger Walker)

William Harold Neidlinger

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

(Grace Bells)

arr. Cynthia Dobrinski

"Christ Was Born on Christmas Day and He Shall Feed His Flock"

(Keyboard - Kathy Schelp.)

"From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"

(Saxophone - Jon Peterson, Keyboard - Sandy Hulse)

arr. Benjamin Culli

"The First Noel and J. S. Bach's Minuet"

(Keyboard - Kathy Schelp)

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

(Grace Bells)

arr. Douglas Wagner

Grace Lutheran Church
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Winter Haven, FL 33880
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THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

DECEMBER 24, 2022

7:30 PM

*(The *indicates when the congregation is to stand.)*

***THE WELCOME, INVOCATION AND OPENING PRAYER**

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

Pastor: Heavenly Father, with joy we enter into the contemplation of the awesome and holy mystery of your Son's incarnation. Open our minds to understand, open our hearts to believe, and open our mouths to proclaim the glory of Him who assumed our human flesh in order to suffer and die in our place. Prepare our hearts to be fitting mangers to cradle Your Son, that He may dwell in us and we in Him tonight and throughout eternity; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

***THE CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**

Pastor: Before we sing our praises to God tonight, let us remember the reason Christ was born and confess our sins to God our Father.

(Please kneel or be seated)

Pastor: Almighty God our Merciful Father,

People: **We confess that we have not acknowledged Your presence with us each day. Too often we have thought, spoken and acted as though You were a God far away; doing the evil You forbid and not doing the good You desire. Yet in the midst of our failings, You have given us the gift of Your only Son. For His sake we ask forgiveness. Fill us again this night with Your Holy Spirit and strengthen our faith that we may live in this world as true brothers and sisters of Christ Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.**

Pastor: Standing in the presence of our Holy God, I bring you good tidings of great joy. In Christ Jesus, the separation between God and mankind has been reconciled. Christ was born into our midst to give us Christmas peace. He died on the cross and rose again to give us eternal peace. Bearing God's Good News, I, therefore as a servant of Christ, announce God's grace to you and in His stead and by His command, forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

(Stand and greet one another with a "Merry Christmas!")

***THE PROCESSIONAL HYMN "O Come All Ye Faithful"**

Hymn 379

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: *Refrain*

Refrain

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

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*

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be glory giv'n!
Word of the Father Now in flesh appearing! *Refrain*

***THE SALUTATION AND COLLECT**

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray. Lord Jesus, You are here. We come to adore You on bended knees with hopeful hearts. Our eyes stretch wide with awe and wonder. May Your enduring presence bring healing to the broken, joy to the downtrodden, and love for the lonely. On this Holy night, we pray with gratitude for Your coming. By Your Spirit, You reside in our hearts. You are here. We adore You.

People: **Amen.**

(Please be seated.)

THE ANTHEM

“Do You Hear What I Hear?”
(Grace Bells)

arr. Douglas Wagner

THE FIRST READING

Isaiah 9:6-7

⁶For 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. ⁷Of 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.

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

THE SECOND READING

Titus 2:11-14

¹¹For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who 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.

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

***THE GOSPEL PROCESSIONAL**

As the Bible is carried into the center aisle, the congregation turns to face the cross for the reading of the Gospel. We do this as a reminder that God has come to be among us. During the procession the congregation sings:

“Angels We have Heard on High” (v. 1)

Hymn 368

**Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o’er the plains,
And the mountains in reply,
Echoing their joyous strains.**

Refrain

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

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

People: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

***THE CHRISTMAS GOSPEL**

Luke 2:1-20, KJV

¹And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. ²(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) ³And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) ⁵To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ⁶And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ⁷And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. ⁸And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ¹⁰And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling

clothes, 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, good will toward men. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. ¹⁶ And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: **Praise to You, O Christ.**

As the Bible is carried back to the Altar, the congregation sings:

***THE HYMN VERSE** “Angels We have Heard on High” (v. 3)

Hymn 368

**Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.**

Refrain

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

THE CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

***THE SERMON HYMN** “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

Hymn 380

**Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”**

Refrain
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 a virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel! Refrain

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 man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth. Refrain

THE MEDITATION “Thorough from Beginning to End”

THE CHRISTMAS PROFESSION OF FAITH

Leader: God thoroughly accomplished our salvation in sending His Son, the Living Word, to join us as our savior.

People: **The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.** *(John 1:14)*

Leader: God did this in the right way and at the right time.

People: **When the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption as God’s children.** *(Galatians 4:4)*

Leader: Our Savior thoroughly identifies with us and perfectly did everything on our behalf.

People: **For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, we have One who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet He did not sin.** *(Hebrews 4:15)*

Leader: Before going to the cross and giving His innocent life for our sins, Jesus said to the Father:

People: **“I have brought You glory on earth by finishing the work You gave Me to do.”** *(John 17:4)*

Leader: Staying on the cross and suffering the punishment we deserved, Jesus said,

People: “It is finished!” With that, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.
(John 19:30)

Leader: On the third day, He rose up from the dead, fulfilling all prophecy. The Risen Christ said to His disciples,

People: “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” *(Luke 24:44)*

Leader: He opens our minds to understand the Scriptures and commissions us to share His Good News with the world.

People: “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
(Luke 24:45-47)

Leader: God continues His mission through each of us and thoroughly equips us through His Word.

People: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. *(2 Timothy 3:15-16)*

Leader: God promises to keep working in us until thorough completion.

People: I am confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. *(Philippians 1:6)*

***THE HYMN OF RESPONSE “O Little Town of Bethlehem”**

Hymn 361

(vv. 1, 3 & 4)

**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.**

**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.

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!

***THE PRAYERS OF CHRISTMAS**

Pastor: Heavenly Father, in the midst of these darkened nights, may we never lose sight of the gift that You gave us on that first Christmas night. In Christ Jesus, You have saved us from our sins, given as an eternal healing from every virus and each disease, removed from us the curse of death and brought life and immortality to light.

People: **May faith in the Christ Child be born again in each of us tonight. May Your Spirit cast out our sin and enter in and renew us to live as Your true sons and daughters until we are finally home with You.**

Pastor: Lord Jesus Christ, in love for us You left Your heavenly throne, came down to us, was born upon this earth, laid in a humble manger and endured all the trials of daily life. Thank You for dwelling among us, being raised in a family like ours, walking the streets of our villages and doing it all in perfect righteousness.

People: **As families and friends gather in houses of worship this evening, digitally and in person, fill the hearts of Your people so that Your love dwells in our homes, Your grace is raised in our families, and Your peace is shared in our communities.**

Pastor: O Prince of Peace, in Your mercy remember those serving in the Armed Forces who are far from home this night and be with their families here at home. Guide our government leaders to steadfastly work for justice and freedom for all people.

People: **Bless those who enforce the law and those who obey the law with grateful cooperation, respect and protection.**

Pastor: During this holy season of the year, remember in Your mercy, O Lord, all of those who are lonely and isolated as well as those who are

neglected or forgotten. Encourage all who despair, comfort the grieving, give strength to the weak and enlighten the lost. All of this we ask through the Name of our Savior You have given us, Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

***THE 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.**

(Please be seated)

CHRIST'S LIGHT COMES TO US

THE ANTHEM

"O Holy Night" *arr. Darlene Zschech,*
(Vocalists with Keyboard) Craig Gower, J.S. Dwight

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

Advent has passed, Christmas has come. We light the Christ Candle to remind us that Jesus 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)* We share that light from the Christ candle one to another this evening and every day of our lives. "For God who said, 'Let light shine out of

darkness,' made His Light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

"Silent Night, Holy 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, Heavenly 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 Thy holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.**

(The candles are extinguished.)

A TIME FOR SILENT MEDITATION

***THE BENEDICTION**

Leader: May the Almighty and Merciful God,
Who gives you the gift of Himself at Christmas
Comfort you with eternal peace
Fill you with unconditional love
And inspire you with unending joy
In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen! Glory to God in the highest!**

***THE RECESSIONAL HYMN**

"Joy to the World"

Hymn 387

(vv. 1, 2 & 4)

**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.**

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.

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.

***THE DISMISSAL**

Pastor: Go in Christmas peace and serve the Lord!

People: Thanks be to God!

THE POSTLUDE



THE PARTICIPANTS

The Preacher
The Liturgists
The Organist/Accompanist
The Handbell Choir Director
The Vocalists

The Sound Technician
The Lectors
The Elder on Duty
The Robing Leader
The Crucifer
The Acolytes
The Greeters
The Ushers

The Rev. Charles T. Reich
The Rev. Brendon T. Moore, Vicar Sam Hoag
Kathy Schelp
Sandy Hulse
Peggy Jo Griffin, Rachel Hoag
Mariah Linkenbach, Gary Stone
Josh Woods
Keith Schelp, Janice Graydon
Cindy Sensabaugh
Lana Toering
Lorraine Gomez
Vera Terry, Bella Wallace
Jim & Claire Rice
Dr. Don Eason, Rodney & Jane Petersen,
Mark Sensabaugh, Roger Walker

Acknowledgments

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