

THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD - CHRISTMAS

Wednesday, December 20, 2023

6:45 pm live and livestreamed



FAITH . DISCIPLESHIP . COMMUNITY
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

The Rev. Alejandro Mejia, Interim Senior Pastor
The Rev. William (Bill) Gohl, Jr., Interim Associate Pastor

At The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, we embrace the uniqueness of every individual and respect their dignity and worth, for all are created in the image of God. We strive to welcome everyone in the fullness of who they are.

Let us call together for reconciliation, and live out God's vision of love for people of every sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, socio-economic status, age, physical or mental ability, political persuasion, race, ethnicity, and personal history. Let us walk together to strive for racial equity, as Jesus calls us to do.

All people are welcome here to worship, build community, and grow together as Jesus' disciples at this place.

Prelude

Please rise as you are able.

Gathering Hymn

Come, Though Long Expected Jesus

1. Come, thou long - ex - pec - ted Je - sus, born to set thy
2. Born thy peo - ple to de - li - ver, born a child and

peo - ple free; from our fears and sins re - lease us,
yet a King, born to reign in us for - e - ver,

let us find our rest in thee. Is - rael's strength and con - so -
now thy gra - cious king - dom bring. By thine own e - ter - nal

la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art; dear de - sire of
spi - rit rule in all our hearts a - lone; by thine all suf -

ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.
fi - cient me - rit, raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

P *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

C **And also with you.**

A *Let us pray. God of grace and mercy,*

C **you became weak so we could find strength.**

A *You set aside your glory to hold our pain,*

C **so we might be healed, even when there seems to be no hope.**

A *You became one of us,*

C **so we could never be alone, in any moment, in any circumstance.**

A *So come now, Child of Bethlehem, to strengthen us in these days.*

May we feel your presence not just as a baby born in a stable long ago and far away,

C **but as the Christ born in our hearts, in our hopes, in our spirits, in our weakness.**

A *You have promised to go before us:*

C **into our brokenness, fears and needs.**

A *You go with us:*

C **into the world's brokenness, to calm fears and meet the needs of others.**

A *And yet still you are here, even now,*

C **to hold us, to comfort us, to empower and live in us,**

A *for Jesus' sake.*

C **Amen.**

Please be seated.

Scripture Lesson

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39, NRSV

A *A Reading from Paul's Letter to the Romans:*

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A *Word of God, Word of Life!*

C **Thanks be to God!**

The Message

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year?

Response to the Word

John: 1-14 *from The Message*

P *A Reading from the Gospel of St. John: The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one. Everything was created through him; nothing - not one thing! - came into being without him. What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out. There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light. The Life-Light was the real thing: Every person*

entering Life he brings into Light. He was in the world, the world was there through him, and yet the world didn't even notice. He came to his own people, but they didn't want him. But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said, He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves. These are the God-begotten, not blood-begotten, not flesh-begotten. The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

C Amen.



- 1 It came up - on the mid - night clear, that glo - rious song of old,
- 2 Still through the clo - ven skies they come with peace - ful wings un - furled,
- 3 And you, be - neath life's crush - ing load, whose forms are bend - ing low,
- 4 For lo! The days are has - t'ning on, by proph - ets seen of old,



from an - gels bend - ing near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
and still their heav'n - ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world.
who toil a - long the climb - ing way with pain - ful steps and slow:
when with the ev - er - cir - cling years shall come the time fore - told,



"Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav'n's all - gra - cious king."
A - bove its sad and low - ly plains they bend on hov - 'ring wing,
look now, for glad and gold - en hours come swift - ly on the wing;
when peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen - dors fling,



The world in sol - emn still - ness lay to hear the an - gels sing.
and ev - er o'er its ba - bel sounds the bless - ed an - gels sing.
oh, rest be - side the wea - ry road and hear the an - gels sing!
and all the world give back the song which now the an - gels sing.

Please rise, as you are able.

P *The peace of the Lord be with you always.*

C **And also with you.**

*We greet one another in the name of the Lord.
After sharing a sign of peace, please remain standing.*

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 our thanks and praise.**

P *You holy, O God, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. He lived among us, as one of us, and drew to himself the poor, the lame, the blind, all those cast out to the margins of life. To all who came, he restored to fullness of life and led them to you. By the baptism of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.*

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.

Breathe your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and cup. As they are the body and blood of Christ for us, so may we be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood, enkindled with the flame of your love.

By your Spirit bind us to Christ, one to another, together in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at the heavenly banquet.

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

C Amen.

P *Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:*

C **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.

P *The gifts of God for the people of God: become what you receive.*

C Thanks be to God!

Please be seated.

Holy Communion

We welcome to the table all who proclaim with us that Jesus Christ is truly present in the bread and the wine. (Note: should you prefer, we also offer gluten free wafers and grape juice.

During the distribution, the following is sung:



O Lamb of God you take a-way our sin; have mer-cy on us, give_ us your
peace. Pre -pare us to re - ceive_ your grace and teach us how to fol - low your ways. Re-
joice! Re - joice! E - man - u - el has come to you, O Is - ra - el.

Tune: O Come, O Come Emmanuel, No. 257; © David Eck, used with permission

Communion Music

- P** *The body of our Lord Jesus Christ and his precious blood strengthen you and keep you in grace from now until life everlasting*
- C** **Amen.**

Candle Lighting and Prayer

- P** *This candle is traditionally known as the candle of Hope, but tonight as we light this candle we acknowledge those things that rob us of Hope.*
- C** **Tonight we are seeking and waiting for Hope.**

As the first candle is lit, silence for prayer is kept.

- A** *This candle is traditionally known as the candle of Peace, but tonight as we light this candle, we acknowledge those things that rob us of Peace.*
- C** **Tonight we are seeking and waiting for Peace.**

As the second candle is lit, silence for prayer is kept.

- P** *This candle is traditionally known as the candle of Joy, but tonight as we light this candle, we acknowledge those things that rob us of Joy.*
- C** **Tonight we are seeking and waiting for Joy.**

As the third candle is lit, silence for prayer is kept.

- A** *This candle is traditionally known as the candle of Love, but tonight as we light this candle, we acknowledge those things that rob us of Love.*
- C** **Tonight we are seeking and waiting for Love.**

As the fourth candle is lit, silence for prayer is kept.

P *You are invited to come forward at this time to light as many candles as you wish in memory of loved ones, as acknowledgment of those things that have robbed you of hope, peace, joy, love and as petition to God for the help that has been there for human beings in ages past. From the shadows that surround us, let us fill this place with light.*

At the conclusion of the candle lighting:

A *Let us pray: We have filled this sanctuary with the light of our lives and our living. In this place there is loneliness and longing, there is sadness and grief, there is loss and broken dreams. Yet too, in this place there is a future waiting to be dreamed, peace that enfolds us, joy that touches our souls with new life, love that sustains and nurtures us. In this place, where two or three are gathered, there is Christ, the light of the world. Send us forth to bear and bring the light and love of Christ to others.*

C **Amen.**

P *The Light of Christ is within you. Let the light fill the space within you and around you. allow the shadows to move to the edges. Feel the hope, peace, joy and love that comes from loving God and neighbor; serving both, for Jesus' sake.*

C **Amen.**

Please rise as you are able.

Sending Hymn

Silent Night, Holy Night!

No. 281



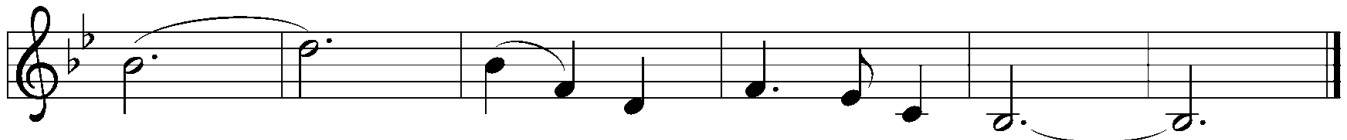
Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht! Al - les schläft,
1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm,
2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake
3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God,



ein - sam wacht nur das trau - te, hoch - hei - li - ge Paar.
all is bright round yon vir - gin moth - er and child.
at the sight; glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,
love's pure light ra - diant beams from your ho - ly face,



Hold - er Kna - be im lok - ki - gen Haar, schlaf in himm - li - scher
Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav - en - ly
heav'n - ly hosts . . . sing, al - le - lu - ia! Christ, the Sav - ior, is
with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at your



Ruh, schlaf in himm - li - scher Ruh.
peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!
birth, Je - sus, Lord, at your birth.

A *Depart in peace, the Lord is with you.*

C **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

Please join us for refreshments in the Gathering Area following worship.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SERVING THIS EVENING

Assisting Minister	Daneene Lucas
Ushers	Sherman Canapp, Doyle McCracken
Livestream	Shawn Nesaw