

The Nativity of Our Lord

A Celebration of Light

Sunday, December 24, 2023



On the twenty-fourth day of the month of December, unknown ages from the time when God created the heavens and the earth and then formed man and woman from the dust of the earth. Several thousand years after the flood, when God made the rainbow shine forth as a sign of the covenant. Twenty-one centuries from the time of Abraham and Sarah; thirteen centuries after Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt. Eleven hundred years from the time of Ruth and the Judges; one thousand years from the anointing of David as king; in the sixty-fifth year of the reign of Octavian Augustus; the whole world being at peace, Jesus Christ, Son of the eternal Father, desiring to sanctify the world by his merciful coming, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born in Bethlehem of Judea of the Virgin Mary. Tonight, we gather to celebrate the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, our light and life, our joy and peace.

*Welcome to worship at Resurrection Lutheran Church of Mankato, MN!
On this holy night we hear the familiar story of Jesus' birth in a stable filled with animals. Into a dark and lonely world the Christ-child came — not into a sterile maternity ward, but into the messiness of human life, to look at each of us face to face so that we might know the power of his forgiveness and mercy in our lives.*

PRELUDE

THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH AND CHRIST CANDLE

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

C: Amen.

P: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

C: The light shines in the darkness. The darkness did not overcome it.

P: Those who lived in a land of deep darkness: for them the light comes.

C: We have seen Christ's glory, of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

P: For a child has been born for us, a son given to us.

C: What has come into being in him was life. The life was the light of all people.

P: Today Christ is born; today salvation has appeared!

C: Glory to God in the highest! Alleluia!

P: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe. With Mary and Joseph, with the angels and shepherds, and with the animals in the stable we gather around your Son, born for us. Bless us, and fill us with joy and wonder as we light these candles. May Jesus be born in our lives, that we might share his light and love with all the world, for he is our light and our salvation. Blessed be God forever.

C: Amen.

O, COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

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;

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,

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

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:

"Glory to God, all glory the highest!"

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,

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

CHILDRENS MESSAGE

THE LIGHT IS NEEDED (*Gen. 1:27; 2:15-17; 3:1-7,23; Rom. 3:22-23*)

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Then God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened . . . Therefore the LORD God sent them out from the garden of Eden. There is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

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 ye nations, rise; join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heaven-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 us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

THE LIGHT IS PROMISED (*Gen. 3:14-15; Num. 24:16-17; Isa. 7:14; 9:2,6*)

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this . . . I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." The oracle of him who hears the words of God, and who knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty . . . I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel. Therefore the LORD Himself will give you a sign. Behold,

the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined . . . 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.

THE FIRST NOEL

The first Noel the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east, beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.

THE LIGHT IS ANNOUNCED *(Luke 1:26-35, 27)*

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God. . . For nothing will be impossible with God."

SPECIAL MUSIC

THE LIGHT IS BORN *(Luke 2:1-7)*

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. 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.

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

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.

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 Emmanuel.

THE LIGHT IS PROCLAIMED *(Luke 2:8-20)*

And there were shepherds in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and they were filled with fear. 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. 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." 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." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they 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.

CHRISTMAS EVE MEDITATION THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

Resurrection Lutheran's communion practices can be found on the "Come To The Table" instructional in your pew. If you are a visitor or guest, please consider referencing this card.

THE LIGHTING OF CANDLES (*John. 1:1-5, 14; 3:16-17*)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And 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. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

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!

BENEDICTION

P: May the God of the angels, who heralded Christ's birth, bring joy to your heart this night and always.

C: Amen.

P: May the God of grace, who gave his only Son to be born for you, fill your life with the peace of Christ.

C: Amen.

P: May Emmanuel, God with us, dwell among us in God the Holy Spirit, until we are brought into God's eternal kingdom.

C: Amen.

P: May Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bless you now and always.

C: Amen.

JOY TO THE WORLD

Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth receive her King.

Let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world! 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 SENDING

P: Go in peace! Jesus Christ has been born for you - for your salvation, your forgiveness,
and your eternal life.

C: Amen.

POSTLUDE

IN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*The beauty of our Sanctuary tonight is made possible, in part, by the donations of these
generous individuals who gave monetary gifts for our poinsettia plants:*

In honor of our family, by Jerry and Joyce Roust

In memory of Robert Dean Bratsch, by his loving wife and family

In memory of our parents and sister by Dave and Wendy LaFavor

In memory of our loving daughter, Diane, by Daryl and Rita Schoemaker

In memory of Alice & William Schroeder and Verna & Reuben Youngerberg,
by Mike and Vicki Youngerberg

In memory of Reinhard & Ruth Riessen, George & Peg Hertz and Rudy Riessen,
by Reinhard and Barb Riessen

In memory of Thomas Severson, Ira & Frances Davis, and Andrew & Jean Severson
by Carol Severson

In honor of Jeannette Kuball and Gene Meschke; In memory of Charlotte Meschke, Mahlon &
Mary Dahle, Herbert & Bernice Quamme, Emery & Lois Meschke,
by Helen Meschke

In memory of our parents, by Pat and Karen McGregor

In honor of our military members and their families, by Doug and Sue Mayer

In honor of prisoners of war and soldiers missing in action, by Don Peterson

In memory of our parents, by Ross and Ruth Heilman

In memory of Warren Litynski, by Sharon Litynski

In memory of our parents, and Dove Morrison and Ardyce Swan
by Victor and Helen Kurth

In memory of JoAnn Proehl, by Harvard and Karen Jaeck

In memory of Harold Sens and Bessie & Julius Eastvold, by Darrell and Ginny Eastvold

In thankfulness for all the blessings from our Lord and Savior, by Audrey Simmons

In memory of Eric Hennen, by Julie Smith

In memory of Robert Heinze, by Nancy Henize

In memory of Karl Darge, by Caryl Darge

In honor of all God's children in the world, by an anonymous donor

Given in love, by Karen Junker

Given in love, by Dave and Helen Schauer