



Unto Us A Child Is Born...

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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The Nativity of Our Lord (Christmas Eve)

December 24, 2024

Welcome to God's house! Please allow us to keep in touch with you by signing the register in the foyer/narthex. Thank you!



PRELUDE *“God Rest Ye Merry Gentleman” Ruby Souther*

WELCOMING REMARKS

Stand

HYMN *“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”* *LSB #380*

INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

OPENING SENTENCES *Psalm 34:1–3, 5, 7, 22*

Pastor: I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

People: **My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad.**

Pastor: Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!

People: **Those who look to Him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.**

Pastor: The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them.

People: **The Lord redeems the life of His servants; none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION *Galatians 4:4–5*

Pastor: Let us go to our loving Father, confident of His forgiveness for Jesus’ sake.

HYMN *“God Loves Me Dearly” LSB #392, verse 1*

Pastor: Heavenly Father,

People: **we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have failed to walk always in the paths of righteousness in our thinking, speaking, and acting; we have not loved You completely or our neighbors as ourselves. We have failed to live as sisters and brothers of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus, whose birth we celebrate this day. In Your great mercy, forgive and renew us that we may be servants of our eternal king to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**

Pastor: God has heard our plea and has responded to our need. “God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law.”

HYMN

“God Loves Me Dearly” LSB #392, verses 2 & 3

Pastor: 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.

People: Amen.

HYMN

“God Loves Me Dearly” LSB #392, verses 4 & 5

INTROIT

Psalm 2:1–2, 4–6; antiphon: Liturgical Text

Pastor: When all was still, and it was midnight,

People: Your almighty Word, O Lord, descended from the royal throne.

Pastor: Why do the nations rage

People: and the peoples plot in vain?

Pastor: The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,

People: against the Lord and against His anointed.

Pastor: He who sits in the heavens laughs;

People: the Lord holds them in derision.

Pastor: Then He will speak to them in His wrath,

People: and terrify them in His fury, saying,

Pastor: “As for Me, I have set My King

People: on Zion, My holy hill.”

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Pastor: When all was still, and it was midnight,

People: Your almighty Word, O Lord, descended from the royal throne.

† WORD †

Pastor: The heavenly sounds of the angelic host praising God have echoed since the beginning of time. Job relates that when the Lord laid the foundations of the earth, “the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God [angels] shouted for joy” (38:7). The prophet Isaiah writes of a time when he heard heavenly beings sounding out the praises of God (Isaiah 6:24), and the psalmist calls on “everything that has

breath” to “praise the Lord” (Psalm 150:6). The traditional French carol “Angels We Have Heard on High” includes us among those who have be blessed to hear the song of the angels. Using the Latin phrase “Gloria in excelsis Deo,” which means “glory to God in the highest,” we add our voices to the glorious sounds of praise as together we sing the next hymn.

HYMN OF PRAISE

“Angels We Have Heard on High” LSB #368

SALUTATION

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: Let us pray.

People: **Gracious God, on this blessed day, we celebrate our Lord’s birth as the fulfillment of Your promise of redemption from sin. With the company of song-filled angels in heaven and jubilant people on earth, we welcome Jesus as the Savior of the world and Lord of our hearts, who now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

Sit

OLD TESTAMENT READING *Isaiah 9:2–7*

Lector: 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.

People: **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.**

Lector: 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.

People: **For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.**

Lector: 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.

People: **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.**

Lector: The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

 This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

HYMN *“Of the Father’s Love Begotten”* *LSB #384*

EPISTLE *Titus 2:11–14*

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

HYMN *“Now Sing We, Now Rejoice”* *LSB #386*

Stand

HOLY GOSPEL *Luke 2:1–20*

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

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

(The Gospel is read.)

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

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

CREED *Apostles’ Creed*

People: **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
 maker of heaven and earth.**

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

born of the virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died and was buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life † everlasting. Amen.

Sit

HYMN OF THE DAY *“Angels from the Realms of Glory” LSB #367*

SERMON

MEDITATION *“A Hallelujah Christmas” Michael Cape and David West*

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

(After each petition...)

Pastor: Lord, in Your mercy

People: **hear our prayer.**

LORD’S PRAYER *Matthew 6:9–13*

People:

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.

Sit

HYMN

"It Came upon the Midnight Clear" LSB #366 verses 1 & 4

CANDLELIGHTING

Pastor: Once again we hear and celebrate the divine Christ child's arrival as our brother in human flesh in Bethlehem. We know this child grew to obtain our redemption for the whole world by His cross and empty tomb. Therefore He is indeed the light of the world. Let us who possess this eternal light of Christ by faith, let it shine both inwardly upon our own souls and minds and outwardly into the lives of all those God places around us.

We hear the word of Christ now, as our candles symbolize how the little child in the manger at Bethlehem is indeed the light of all our human race.

Stand *(The candles are lit as the Holy Scriptures are read aloud by the Pastor.)*

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:6-13)

"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12)

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16)

HYMN

"Silent Night, Holy Night" LSB #363

**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!**

**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.**

COLLECT

Pastor: Let us pray.

O God, You make this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that as we have known the mysteries of that Light on earth we may also come to the fullness of His joys in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

BENEDICTION

Pastor: The blessing of God Almighty—the Father, the † Son, and the Holy Spirit—be with you, now and forevermore.

People: Amen.

HYMN *"Joy to the World" LSB #387*

Creative Worship for the Lutheran Parish, Series C, Quarter 1.

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What are the 12 days of Christmas?

Christmas, according to the liturgical calendar, isn't just a day, but a season. Many Christians know the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" or recall that Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* is about the last night of Christmas. But what defines the Christmas season?

The 12 days of Christmas are a reversal of the season of Advent. Traditionally, Christians have fasted during Advent as we await the celebration of the birth of our Savior. The period from Christmas Day to the day before Epiphany (the celebration of the magi visiting Jesus, the baptism of Jesus and the beginning of his earthly ministry) is a period of daily feasting. This is surprising, given the reason for celebrating several of the days.

The first day of Christmas, the Feast of the Nativity, is obvious enough as a reason to celebrate. The Messiah has been born into the world! The next day, however, is the feast of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, who was killed under the authority of Saul of Tarsus/Paul (Acts 8:1). The emotional whiplash of celebrating the birth of the Savior and then the next day celebrating the life and martyrdom of the first person to die for Christ is stunning. However, tradition calls for a joyful feast to celebrate the faithfulness of Stephen, even unto death.

The next day, the third of the 12, celebrates the life of St. John the Apostle. He was, traditionally, the only disciple who wasn't martyred. Tradition holds that John took care of Mary, the mother of Jesus, made disciples, grew old and finally died a natural death in Ephesus.

The fourth day of Christmas is the most shocking. The Feast of the Holy Innocents commemorates the death of all boys in Bethlehem, aged 2 and under, at the hands of Herod the Great's soldiers (Matthew 2:16-18). Again, we feel the emotional rollercoaster, as we're reminded that the Christian life isn't simply one of sweetness and joy, but also of pain, hardship and injustice. Nevertheless, the fourth day of Christmas is the *Feast of the Holy Innocents*, rather than a fast, because we celebrate the One who has conquered sin and death and doesn't surrender these precious little ones, or any others, to the grave forever.

The following days celebrate Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Becket's resistance to injustice; the holy family; Pope Sylvester, who resisted the Donatist and Arian controversies (in many Germanic-speaking countries, New Year's Eve is still called "Sylvester"); the circumcision of Jesus; St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzen, who defended the doctrine of the Trinity; Jesus' presentation and naming in the Jerusalem temple; the hermitage of St. Simon on the pillar; and even two American saints: Elizabeth Ann Seton and John Neumann.

These 12 days help Christians remember that the life of faith is full of challenges and hardships but also contains plenty of reasons to celebrate as we remember the heroes and heroines of the church, and most importantly, our Lord and Savior.

Poinsettia Dedications

Armstrong Family In memory of Carl & Billie Armstrong

Armstrong Family In memory of Doris & Edless Adams

Cuneo Family As an Expression of Joy

David West In memory of Joan, Robert Thomas
and Robert Nelson West

DeAnn Barrios In memory of Earl, Joyce & Lee Souther

DeAnn Barrios In gratitude of Susan Cleveland & Elaine Waswick

DeAnn Barrios As an Expression of Joy for
All of Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office

DeAnn Barrios As an Expression of Joy for Jody, Keith
and Blythe Bissonnette

Eric Lapeyrouse In memory of Glynn Lapeyrouse

Frank Alessio & Debra Shevlin In memory of Lorraine Alessio

Frank Alessio & Debra Shevlin In memory of Judith Alessio

Poinsettia Dedications

Jerrie Fitzgerald In memory of Gordon "Fitz" Fitzgerald

Jerrie Fitzgerald In memory of Stephanie Dahl

John & Patsy Wegner As an Expression of Joy for All God's Gifts

Joseane Lapeyrouse In memory of
Maria de Lourdes Domingos Japiassu

Kinsella Family As an Expression of Joy

Pat Bauman In memory of John Keen

Roy & Edith Labat In memory of All our past loved ones

Souther Family In memory of Earl & Joyce Souther

Souther Family In memory of George & Karen Engebretsen

Stacie Bauman In memory of Troy Rhodes Sr.

Tina West In memory of Benton, Kevin and Lila Larousse