



God with us.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Christmas Eve Celebration

Thursday, December 24, 2021

1:00^{PM} ✕ 4:00^{PM} ✕ 7:00^{PM}

GATHERING MUSIC

PRELUDE

"Of the Father's Love Begotten"

11th century plainsong
arr. Mark Hayes

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please stand.

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

PROCLAMATION OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

The following is read:

Throughout the season of Advent,
the Church has reflected on God's promises,
 so often spoken by the prophets,
 to send a savior to the people of Israel
 who would be Emmanuel, that is, God with us.

In the fullness of time those promises were fulfilled.

With hearts full of joy

 let us listen to the proclamation of our Savior's birth.

The following is intoned by a cantor/minister:

Today, the twenty-fifth day of December,
unknown ages from the time when God created the heavens and the earth
 and then formed man and woman in his own image.

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 week according to the prophecy of Daniel.

In the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;
the seven hundred and fifty-second year from the foundation
 of the city of Rome.

The forty-second year of the reign of Octavian Augustus;
 the whole world being at peace,

Jesus Christ, eternal God and Son of the eternal Father,
 desiring to [make holy] the world by his most merciful coming,
 being conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 and nine months having passed since his conception,

was born in Bethlehem of Judea of the Virgin Mary.

Today is the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh.

GATHERING SONG

Joy to the World
ELW 267

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 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 heav'n and nature sing. | 2 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. |
| 3 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. | 4 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. |

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Please sit.

SPECIAL MUSIC

1:00^{PM}

"While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night"
violinist, Gene Miller

4:00^{PM}

"Breath of Heaven (Mary's Song)"
Chris Eaton and Amy Grant
vocalist, Regina Sanders

7:00^{PM}

"Mary, Did You Know?"
Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene
vocalist, Sherry Rogers

CHILDREN'S SERMON *(The children's sermon will be part of the 4:00^{PM} & 7:00^{PM} services.)*

SPECIAL MUSIC

4:00^{PM}

"Still, Still, Still"

Austrian Carol; arr. Norman Luboff
Christ Mertz Vocal Choir

7:00^{PM}

"The Angel Gabriel From Heav'n Came Down"

Basque Carol
vocalist, Elizabeth Kemner

READING - Isaiah 9.2-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah, the 9th chapter.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

READING - Titus 2.11-14

A reading from the letter to Titus from the apostle Paul, the 2nd chapter.

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety
and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright,
and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great
God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for him-
self a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

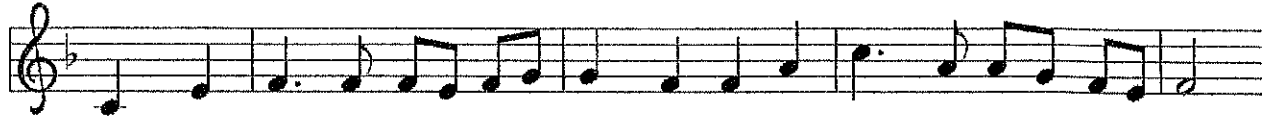
Please stand.

GOSPEL PROCESSION

The first verse of "Once in Royal David's City" ELW 269 is sung as the procession comes into the congregation. The second verse of "Once in Royal David's City" ELW 269 is sung as the procession returns to the altar.



1 Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly cat - tle shed,
2 He came down to earth from heav - en who is God and Lord of all,



where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a man - ger for his bed:
and his shel - ter was a sta - ble, and his cra - dle was a stall;



Mar - y was that moth - er mild, Je - sus Christ, her lit - tle child.
with the poor and meek and low - ly, lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.

GOSPEL Luke 2.1- 20

The holy gospel according to Saint Luke, the 2nd chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth 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 heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."

So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Please sit.

CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

Please stand.

HYMN OF THE DAY

Angels We Have Heard on High
ELW 289

1 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.

2 Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
which inspire your heav'nly song?

Refrain
Gloria in excelsis Deo;
gloria in excelsis Deo.

3 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.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Joining our voices with the heavenly host and Christians throughout time and space, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Each petition will conclude "Merciful God," please respond "received our prayer."

Rejoicing in your Word made flesh among us, we commend these prayers to you, confident of your grace and love made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Let us share a sign of God's peace with one another.

While the peace of Christ is being shared, the altar for the Sacrament of Holy Communion is prepared.

OFFERING & OFFERTORY

1:00^{PM} & 7:00^{PM}

"Adoration"

Mark Hayes

4:00^{PM}

"The Fantastic Beasts"

arr. Sandra Eithun

Christ Mertz Bell Choir

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy God, Creator of all and Source of life, at the birth of time your word brought light into the world. In the fullness of time, you sent your Word, born of Mary, to shine in our darkness and to make us your daughters and sons.

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.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Remembering, therefore, his birth and life among us, his death and resurrection,

We await his coming again when all things will be restored in him.

Come, Lord Jesus.

By your Spirit bless us and this bread and cup, that, held and nourished by you, we may live as your children, shining with the light of your Son.

Come, Holy Spirit.

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

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray ...

**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.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Christ has set the table with more than enough for all. Come!

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS

Away in a Manger (Cradle Song) - ELW 278

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Away in a manger,
no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid
down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky
looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep
on the hay. | 2 The cattle are lowing;
the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus,
no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus;
look down from the sky
and stay by my cradle till
morning is nigh. | 3 Be near me, Lord Jesus;
I ask you to stay
close by me forever
and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children
in your tender care
and fit us for heaven,
to live with you there. |
|---|---|---|

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear - ELW 282

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 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 hear the angels sing. | 2 Still through the cloven skies they 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. |
| 3 And you, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow:
look now, for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing;
oh, rest beside the weary road
and hear the angels sing! | 4 For lo! The days are hast'ning on,
by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and all the world give back the song
which now the angels sing. |

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice - ELW 288

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Good Christian friends,
rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today! | 2 Good Christian friends,
rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss:
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door,
and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this! | 3 Good Christian friends,
rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave;
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save! |
|---|---|---|

Once all have communed, the congregation stands and the following blessing is offered:

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ bless you and keep you in his grace.
Amen.

CANDLELIGHT CELEBRATION

Silent Night, Holy Night!
ELW 281

As the song begins, the congregation is encouraged to light their candles. During the first verse of Silent Night, those gathered are invited to sing either in German or in English. Upon the start of the third verse, those assembled are asked to raise their candles high.

Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!	Silent Night! Holy Night!
Alles schläft; einsam wacht	All is calm; all is bright.
Nur das traute heilige Paar	Round yon virgin
	Mother and Child
Holder Knab im lockigen Haar,	Holy infant
	so tender and mild
Schlafe in himmlischer Ruh!	Sleep in heavenly peace,
Schlafe in himmlischer Ruh!	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!

(raise candle high)

Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from your holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

PROLOGUE OF THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN - John 1.1-4, 14

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 anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of [all people].
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth;
we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

Silence for reflection.

CANDLELIGHT BLESSING

Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine upon you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace;
In the name of the Father, the ☩ Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

SENDING SONG

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
ELW 270

1 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!"

Refrain

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

2 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, incarnate deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel!

Refrain

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

3 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.

Refrain

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

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

All the Earth Rejoices

George Frederick Handel
arr. Mark Hayes



Welcome to Christ Mertz Lutheran Church

“to celebrate God’s grace and share God’s love with all people”

Merry Christmas!!

As we gather this day for worship, please be aware of the following:

- * A special welcome to all visitors with us today. If you are looking for a home congregation, please join us Sunday mornings @ 9^{AM}. Sunday school runs concurrently with the church service. For more information about the church and its programming, go to www.christmertz.org.
 - * All individuals — desiring to wear masks — are encourage to do so. During this time of pandemic, individuals and families are encouraged to be mindful of their neighbors.
 - * We encourage all those who haven’t filled out a **communion card** to do so this day,
 - * The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be distributed during all services. All individuals are welcome to receive the sacrament regardless of denominational affiliation. The sacrament is open all. If it is not your normal practice to receive communion, simply come forward for a blessing.
 - * The altar flowers, bulletins, and children’s bulletins are given to the glory of God by Cindy Haring and her family.
- 📺 Having found that we now serve a wider audience, Christ Mertz live streams its services and events and records them for broadcast via the internet. Attending live services or event constitutes your consent to be included in any filming, photographing, audio recording, or broadcast and for any other use in whole or in part, including publicity and promotion. If you wish to attend but prefer to avoid being filmed, please sit in the back pews on the side aisles.
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