

Divine Service for Christmas Eve

Tuesday, December 24, 2019

10:00 P.M.



To us a child is born.

Christmas Eve Divine Service, as the Vigil of the Nativity, marks the end of the Advent Season and the beginning of Christmas. The practice of beginning the celebration of a feast on the evening prior has its roots in the Bible, which calculates the day from evening to evening (e.g., Genesis 1: “And there was evening and there was morning, the first day”). In the Eastern Churches, Christmas officially begins when the first star appears in the sky, a reminder of the star of Bethlehem. Beginning our celebration of Christmas in the evening is especially appropriate, since it was while “keeping watch over their flock by night” that the shepherds received the good news of Jesus’ birth. Tonight’s readings focus on the ancient prophecies of the coming Savior and the fulfillment of those prophecies in the little Judean town of Bethlehem, over two thousand years ago.

Tonight, we appropriately celebrate the Christ-Mass with the Service of Holy Communion, recognizing that the same Son of God who once entered the world through the lowliness of Mary’s womb comes to us now in the lowliness of bread and wine. The service concludes with a candlelight reading of John 1:1-14. Ending the Divine Service with a reading of John 1 is actually an ancient practice (those of you who were raised in the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church may remember it from Sunday Mass: *In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum...*); it is especially appropriate on Christmas Eve as we remember that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

The cover image for Christmas Eve (reverse) is “The Nativity” (ca. 1510) from Albrecht Dürer’s woodcut series *The Small Passion*. Dürer, an artist and humanist from Nuremberg, was an early friend of the Reformation. In *The Small Passion*, Dürer created illustrations for a small, portable devotional book depicting important events from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. In “The Nativity,” Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and an angel kneel in adoration to Christ. In a foreshadowing Christ’s Passion, Dürer incorporated a central cross into the roof rafters of the dilapidated stable.

Holy Communion is celebrated this evening. We believe that in the Lord’s Supper, Christ himself is truly present in his body and blood, under the form of bread and wine, given for Christians to eat and to drink. All who have been baptized and instructed in the Christian faith and who profess this faith as taught in the Evangelical Lutheran Church are invited to share in this sacrament.

This Evening’s Worship Servants

	Christmas Eve 10pm
<i>Worship Assistant</i>	Tim Leydig
<i>Elder</i>	Mark King
<i>Children’s Message</i>	Pastor Tim Boerger
<i>Communion Asst.</i>	Kathy Nicholson Colette Carter Luca Satterlee
<i>Ushers</i>	Gaetan Brunetto Paul Fowler
<i>Readers</i>	Cindy Miezis Paul Fowler
<i>Greeters</i>	Mary Rajnik Marianne Compton
<i>Acolyte</i>	Nicole Carrasco
<i>Altar Guild</i>	Nancy Wald (<i>set</i>) Karen Howard (<i>clean</i>)



PRELUDE MUSIC

All rise and face the rear of the church.

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

INVOCATION

- P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C **Amen.**

INTROIT

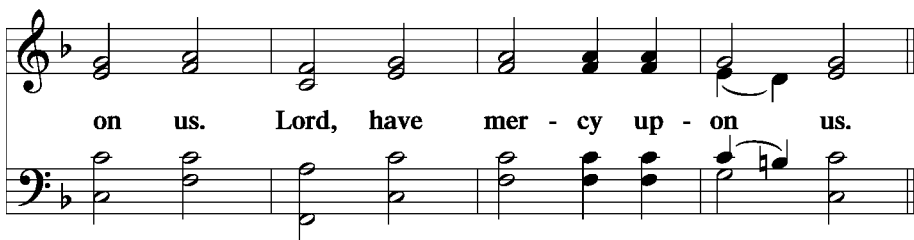


- P** To us a child is born, to us a son is | giv-en, *
 And the Government shall be on his | shoul-der.
 And he shall be called Wonderful Counselor, | Mighty God, *
 Everlasting Father, | Prince of Peace.
- C** **Oh sing unto the Lord a | new song; ***
for He has done | marvelous things.
Glory be to the Father and | to the Son *
and to the Holy | Spi-rit;
As it was in the be- | gin-ning *
is now and will be forever. | A-men.
- P** To us a child is born, to us a son is | giv-en, *
 And the Government shall be on his | shoul-der.
 And he shall be called Wonderful Counselor, | Mighty God, *
 Everlasting Father, | Prince of Peace.

PROCESSIONAL HYMN *O Come All Ye Faithful*

LSB 379

KYRIE



Advent is the time of promise; it is not yet the time of fulfillment. We are still in the midst of everything and in the logical inexorability and relentless-ness of destiny....Space is still filled with the noise of destruction and annihilation, the shouts of self-assurance and arrogance, the weeping of despair and helplessness. But round about the horizon the eternal realities stand silent in their age-old longing. There shines on them already the first mild light of the radiant fulfillment to come. From afar sound the first notes as of pipes and voices, not yet discernable as a song or melody. It is all far off still, and only just announced and foretold. But it is happening, today.

—Alfred Delp

We begin with that which is elder than our beginning and shall over-live our end, the mercy of God.

—John Donne

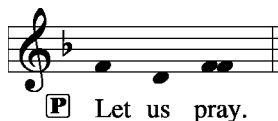
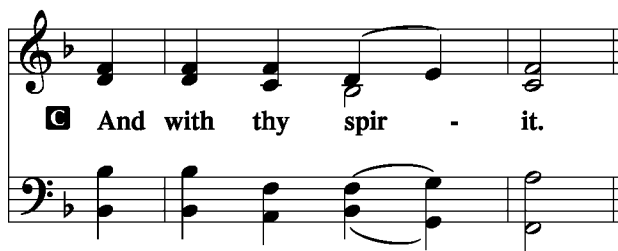


GLORIA

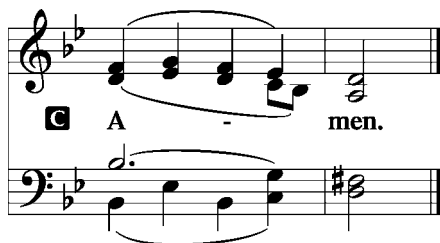
Angels We Have Heard on High verses 1, 3

LSB 368

SALUTATION AND COLLECT



- P** O God, You make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that as we joyfully receive Him as our Redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold Him when He comes to be our Judge; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



*Man's maker was made man
that He, Ruler of the stars,
might nurse at His mother's
breast; that the Bread might
hunger, the Fountain thirst, the
Light sleep, the Way be tired
on its journey; that Truth might
be accused of false witnesses,
the Teacher be beaten with
whips, the Foundation be sus-
pended on wood; that Strength
might grow weak; that the
Healer might be wounded; that
Life might die.*

—Augustine of Hippo

*And in the days of those kings
the God of heaven will set up a
kingdom that shall never be
destroyed, nor shall the king-
dom be left to another people.
It shall break in pieces all
these kingdoms and bring
them to an end, and it shall
stand forever.*

Daniel 2:44

FIRST READING (sit)

Isaiah 9:2-7

The Prophet Isaiah foretells the coming of the Savior.

- ² 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.
- ³ 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.
- ⁴ 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.
- ⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood

will be burned as fuel for the fire.
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.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

G Thanks be to God.

HYMN

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming
 verses 1, 3

LSB 359

SECOND READING

1 John 4:7-16

God demonstrates His love by sending His Son

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

G Thanks be to God.

ALLELUIA (*stand*)



There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.

Isaiah 11:1-6



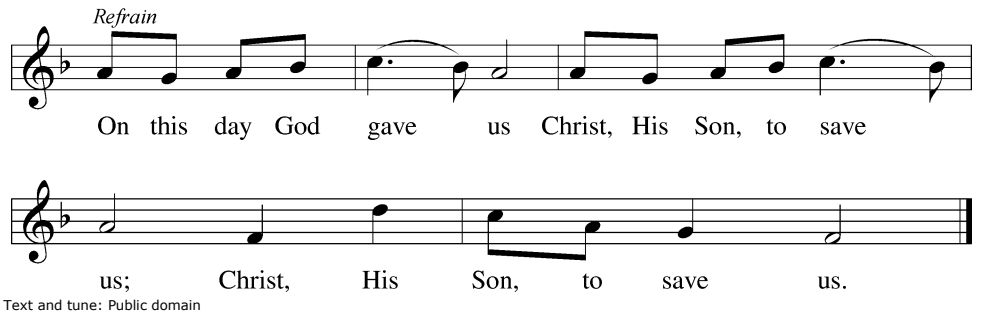
Mary bore a mute Babe,
 though in Him
 were hidden all our tongues.
 Joseph carried Him,
 yet hidden in Him
 was a silent nature
 older than everything.
 The Lofty One became like a
 little child,
 yet hidden in Him
 was a treasure of Wisdom
 that suffices for all.
 He was lofty
 but he sucked Mary's milk,
 and from His blessing
 all creation sucks,
 He is the Living Breast
 of living breath;
 By His life
 the dead were suckled,
 and they revived.

—St. Ephrem the Syrian



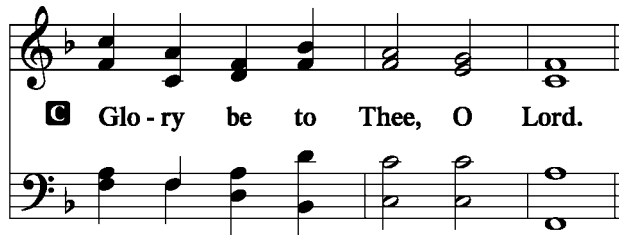
The founders of the great religions say, in one way or another, "I am here to show you the way to spiritual reality. Do all this." That's advice. Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, comes and says, "I am spiritual reality itself. You could never come up to me and, therefore, I had to come down to you." That's news.

—Timothy J. Keller



HOLY GOSPEL

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



THE NATIVITY STORY (FIRST PART)

Luke 2:1-7

St. Luke tells the story of Jesus' birth.

¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And 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, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And 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.

HYMN (*sit*)

Once in Royal David's City
verses 1, 2, 4

LSB 376

THE NATIVITY STORY (SECOND PART) (*stand*)

Luke 2:8-20

The shepherds hear the Good News.

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

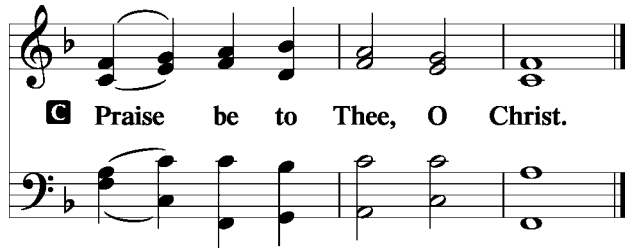
¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵When 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 hap-

pened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.



The nativity mystery "conceived from the Holy Spirit and born from the Virgin Mary", means, that God became human, truly human out of his own grace. The miracle of the existence of Jesus, his "climbing down of God" is: Holy Spirit and Virgin Mary! Here is a human being, the Virgin Mary, and as he comes from God, Jesus comes also from this human being. Born of the Virgin Mary means a human origin for God. Jesus Christ is not only truly God, he is human like every one of us. He is human without limitation. He is not only similar to us, he is like us.

—Karl Barth

SERMON HYMN *(sit)*

From Heaven Above
verses 1, 2, 3, 6

LSB 358

SERMON

Pastor Timothy Boerger

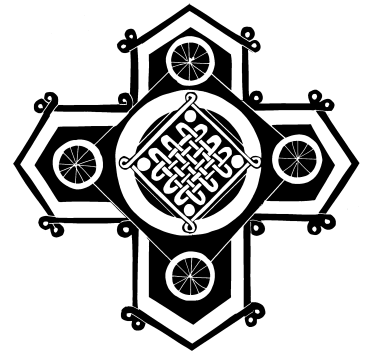
P The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

G Amen.

ANTHEM

Suo Gân

Chancel Choir



APOSTLES' CREED *(stand)*

G 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.
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.**

Without the incarnation, Christianity isn't even a very good story, and most sadly, it means nothing. "Be nice to one another" is not a message that can give my life meaning, assure me of love beyond brokenness, and break open the dark doors of death with the key of hope.

The incarnation is an essential part of Jesus-shaped spirituality.

—Michael Spencer

At issue here is the question: "To whom do I belong? God or to the world?" Many of my daily preoccupations suggest that I belong more to the world than to God. A little criticism makes me angry, and a little rejection makes me depressed. A little praise raises my spirits, and a little success excites me. It takes very little to raise me up or thrust me down. Often I am like a small boat on the ocean, completely at the mercy of its waves. All the time and energy I spend in keeping some kind of balance and preventing myself from being tipped over and drowning shows that my life is mostly a struggle for survival: not a holy struggle, but an anxious struggle resulting from the mistaken idea that it is the world that defines me.

As long as I keep running about asking: "Do you love me? Do you really love me?" I give all power to the voices of the world and put myself in bondage because the world is filled with "ifs." The world says: "Yes, I love you if you are good-looking, intelligent, and wealthy. I love you if you have a good education, a good job, and good connections. I love you if you produce much, sell much, and buy much." There are endless "ifs" hidden in the world's love. These "ifs" enslave me, since it is impossible to respond adequately to all of them. The world's love is and always will be conditional. As long as I keep looking for my true self in the world of conditional love, I will remain "hooked" to the world—trying, failing, and trying again. It is a world that fosters addictions because what it offers cannot satisfy the deepest craving of my heart.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

SHARING OF THE PEACE

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C And also with you.

God's people greet one another in the name of the Lord.


ANTHEM *(sit)*

The King Shall Come

Shepherd's Bells

OFFERING

OFFERTORY *(sit)*



C Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -



new a right spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a -



way from Thy pres-ence, and take not Thy Ho - ly Spir - it

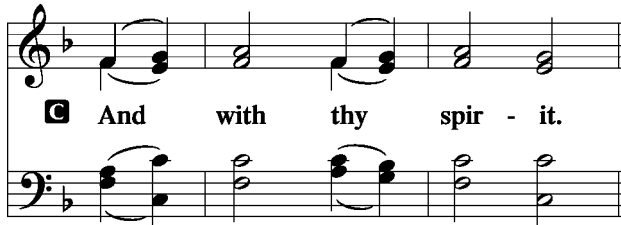
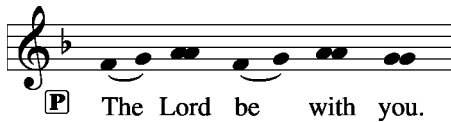


from me. Re - store un - to me the joy of Thy sal - va -



THE SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

PREFACE



Oh, what love! Christ would not entrust our redemption to angels, to millions of angels; but he would come himself, and in person suffer; he would not give a low and a base price for us clay. He would buy us with a great ransom, so as he might over-buy us, and none could over-bid him in his market for souls. If there had been millions of more believers, and many heavens, without any new bargain his blood should have bought them all, and all these many heavens should have smelled one rose of life; Christ should have been one and the same tree of life in them all. Oh, we under-bid, and undervalue that Prince of love, who did overvalue us; we will not sell all we have to buy him; he sold all he had, and himself too, to buy us.

—Samuel Rutherford



We have become so accustomed to the idea of divine love and of God's coming at Christmas that we no longer feel the shiver of fear that God's coming should arouse in us. We are indifferent to the message, taking only the pleasant and agreeable out of it and forgetting the serious aspect, that the God of the world draws near to the people of our little earth and lays claim to us.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

Song of Solomon 2:3-4 (KJV)



*The tree of life my soul hath seen
Laden with fruit and always green
The trees of nature fruitless be
Compared with Christ the apple tree.*

*His beauty doth all things excel
By faith I know but ne'er can tell
The glory which I now can see
In Jesus Christ the apple tree.*

*For happiness I long have sought
And pleasure dearly I have bought
I missed of all but now I see
'Tis found in Christ the apple tree.*

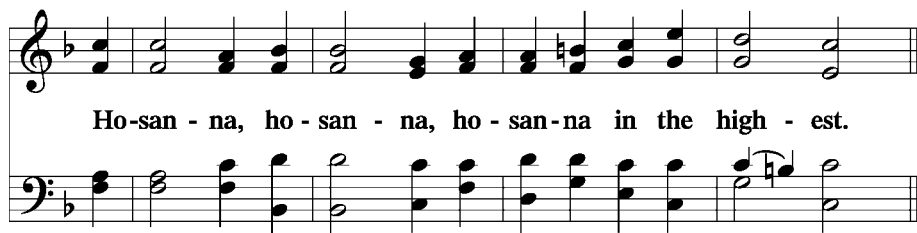
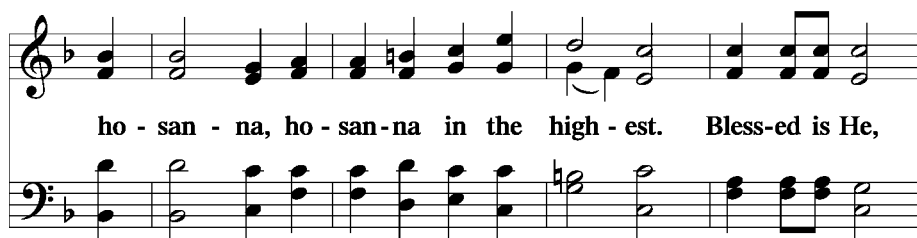
*I'm weary with my former toil
Here I will sit and rest a while
Under the shadow I will be
Of Jesus Christ the apple tree.*

*This fruit does make my soul to thrive
It keeps my dying faith alive
Which makes my soul in haste to be
With Jesus Christ the apple tree.*

—18th century carol

P It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord; for in the mystery of the Word made flesh You have given us a new revelation of Your glory that, seeing You in the person of Your Son, we may know and love those things which are not seen. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

SANCTUS



LORD'S PRAYER

- P** Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:
G **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.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

P Our Lord Je-sus Christ, on the night when He was be-trayed, took bread,
 and when He had giv - en thanks, He broke it and gave it to the
 dis-ci-ples and said: "Take, eat; this is My † bod - y, which is giv-en for you.
 This do in re-mem - brance of Me." In the same way al - so
 He took the cup after sup - per, and when He had giv-en thanks, He gave it
 to them, say - ing: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in
 My † blood, which is shed for you for the for-give-ness of sins.
 This do, as often as you drink it, in re-mem-brance of Me."

PAX DOMINI

P The peace of the Lord be with you al - ways.

Jesus stands at the door knocking (Rev. 3:20). In total reality, he comes in the form of the beggar, of the dissolute human child in ragged clothes, asking for help. He confronts you in every person that you meet. As long as there are people, Christ will walk the earth as your neighbor, as the one through whom God calls you, speaks to you, makes demands on you. That is the great seriousness and great blessedness of the Advent message. Christ is standing at the door; he lives in the form of a human being among us.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer



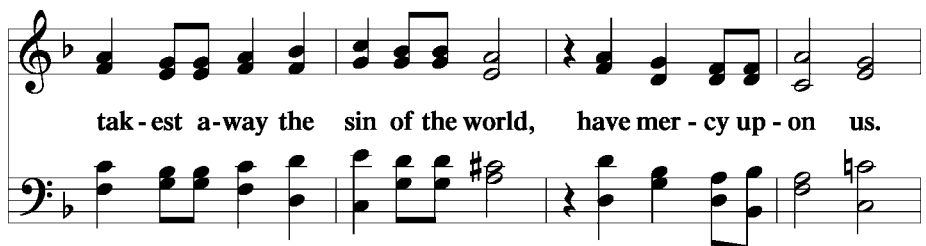
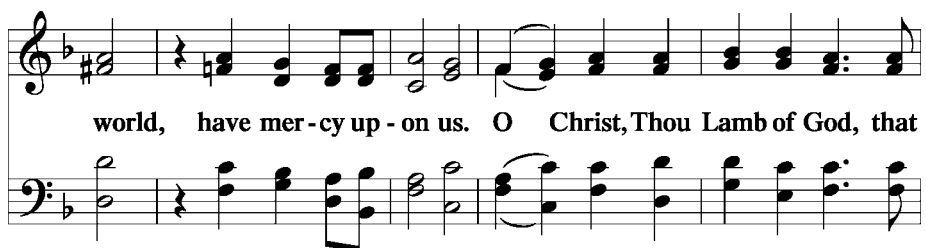
Tonight our Advent anticipations are over. Christ arrives. God enters creation as every human ever has – but though the way is common, it is God who takes that way tonight, so the birth is uncommon indeed, a crack in the universe, and the baby blazes with divinity.

Ah, but the baby's a baby, after all. And he's born in a stall, the tethering of animals – so who's to know the difference? Mary. Joseph. Those who heard and believed the promises. Those who sang the song of Advent. Me. You.

—Walter Wangerin Jr.



AGNUS DEI (sit)



Still, still, still,
One can hear the falling snow.
For all is hushed,
The world is sleeping,
Holy Star its vigil keeping.
Still, still, still,
One can hear the falling snow.

Sleep, sleep, sleep,
'Tis the eve of our Saviour's
birth.
The night is peaceful all
around you,
Close your eyes,
Let sleep surround you.
Sleep, sleep, sleep,
'Tis the eve of our Saviour's
birth.

Dream, dream, dream,
Of the joyous day to come.
While guardian angels without
number,
Watch you as you sweetly
slumber.
Dream, dream, dream,
Of the joyous day to come.

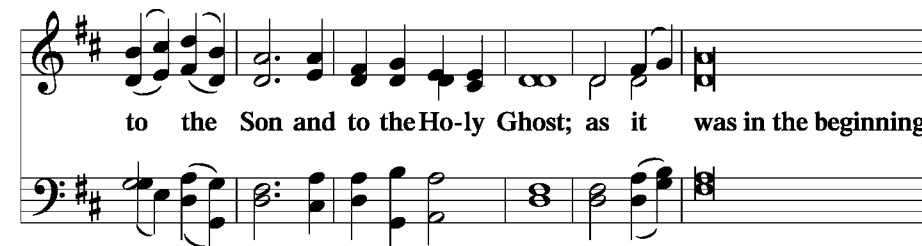
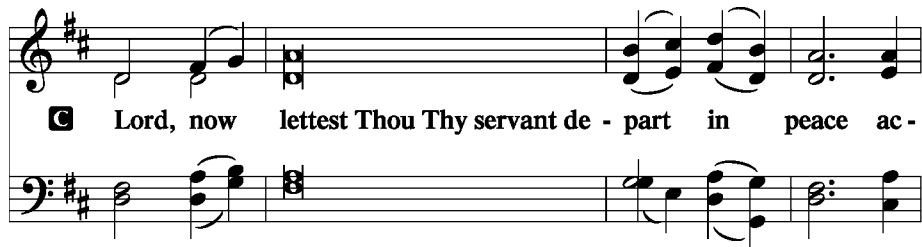
—Austrian carol

DISTRIBUTION

Hark, the Herald Angels Sing
What Child is This?

LSB 380
LSB 370

NUNC DIMITTIS (stand)



This Nativity night bestowed peace on the whole world; so let no one threaten. This is the night of the Most Gentle One – Let no one be cruel. This is the night of the Humble One – Let no one be proud. Now is the day of joy – Let us not revenge; Now is the day of Good Will – Let us not be mean. In this Day of Peace – Let us not be conquered by anger. Today the Bountiful impoverished Himself for our sake; so, rich one, invite the poor to your table. Today we receive a Gift for which we did not ask; so let us give alms to those who implore and beg us. This present Day cast open the heavenly doors to our prayers; let us open our door to those who ask our forgiveness. Today the divine being took upon Himself the seal of our humanity, in order for humanity to be decorated by the Seal of divinity.

—Isaac the Syrian



There are many of you in this congregation who think to yourselves: "If only I had been there! How quick I would have been to help the Baby! I would have washed his linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger!" Yes, you would! You say that because you know how great Christ is, but if you had been there at that time you would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem. Childish and silly thoughts are these! Why don't you do it now? You have Christ in your neighbor. You ought to serve him, for what you do to your neighbor in need you do to the Lord Christ himself.

—Martin Luther

God travels wonderful ways with human beings, but he does not comply with the views and opinions of people. God does not go the way that people want to prescribe for him; rather, his way is beyond all comprehension, free and self-determined beyond all proof. Where reason is indignant, where our nature rebels, where our piety anxiously keeps us away: that is precisely where God loves to be. There he confounds the reason of the reasonable; there he aggravates our nature, our piety—that is where he wants to be, and no one can keep him from it. Only the humble believe him and rejoice that God is so free and so marvelous that he does wonders where people despair, that he takes what is little and lowly and makes it marvelous. And that is the wonder of all wonders, that God loves the lowly.... God is not ashamed of the lowliness of human beings. God marches right in. He chooses people as his instruments and performs his wonders where one would least expect them. God is near to lowliness; he loves the lost, the neglected, the unseemly, the excluded, the weak and broken.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Our Lord took on a body like ours and lived as a man in order that those who had refused to recognize Him in His superintendence and capacity of the whole universe might come to recognize from the works He did here below in the body that what dwelled in this body was the Word of God.

—Athanasius of Alexandria



THE SERVICE OF LIGHT

The lighting of our candles from the Christ Candle represents the light of Christ spreading into the world as we, like the shepherds, go forth rejoicing and sharing the good news. As the light spreads through the congregation, please keep your lit candle upright while your neighbor dips their unlit candle towards yours.

HOLY GOSPEL

John 1:1-14

The light shines in the darkness.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And 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.

HYMN

Silent Night

LSB 363



1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm, all is bright Round yon
2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep-herds quake at the sight; Glo - ries
3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God, love's pure light Ra - diant



vir - gin moth-er and child. Ho - ly In-fant, so ten-der and mild,
stream from heav-en a - far, Heav'n-ly hosts sing, Al - le - lu - ia!
beams from Thy ho - ly face With the dawn of re-deem - ing grace,



Sleep in heav - en - ly peace, Sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
Christ, the Sav - ior, is born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!
Je - sus, Lord, at Thy birth, Je - sus, Lord, at Thy birth.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

P 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.

C Amen.

SALUTATION AND BENEDICAMUS

You may extinguish your candle as lights are raised.



P The Lord be with you.



C And with thy spir - it.



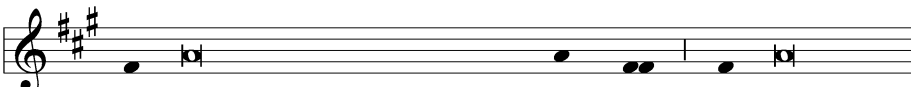
A Bless we the Lord.



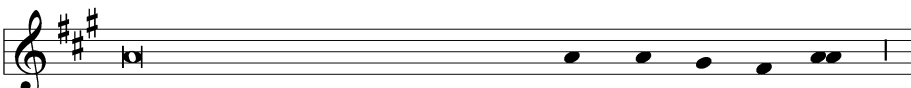
C Thanks be to God.



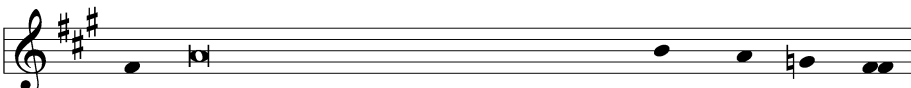
BENEDICTION



P The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make



His face shine upon you and be gra - cious un - to you.



The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.



He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Colossians 1:15-20

Jesus is the parable of the Father's love given to transform us so that we might be drawn into the new creation called the kingdom of God."

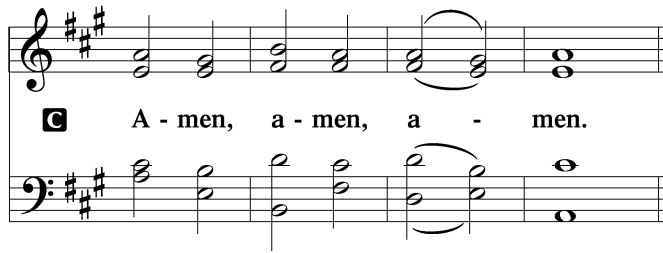
—Stanley Hauerwas

Behold a new and wondrous mystery.

My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voice in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of justice. And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed; He had the power; He descended; He redeemed; all things yielded in obedience to God. This day He Who is, is Born; and He Who is, becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the Word He became flesh, His nature, because of impassability, remaining unchanged.

—John Chrysostom,
Nativity Sermon



HYMN

Joy to the World

LSB 387

POSTLUDE

West Indies Carol

Shepherd's Bells



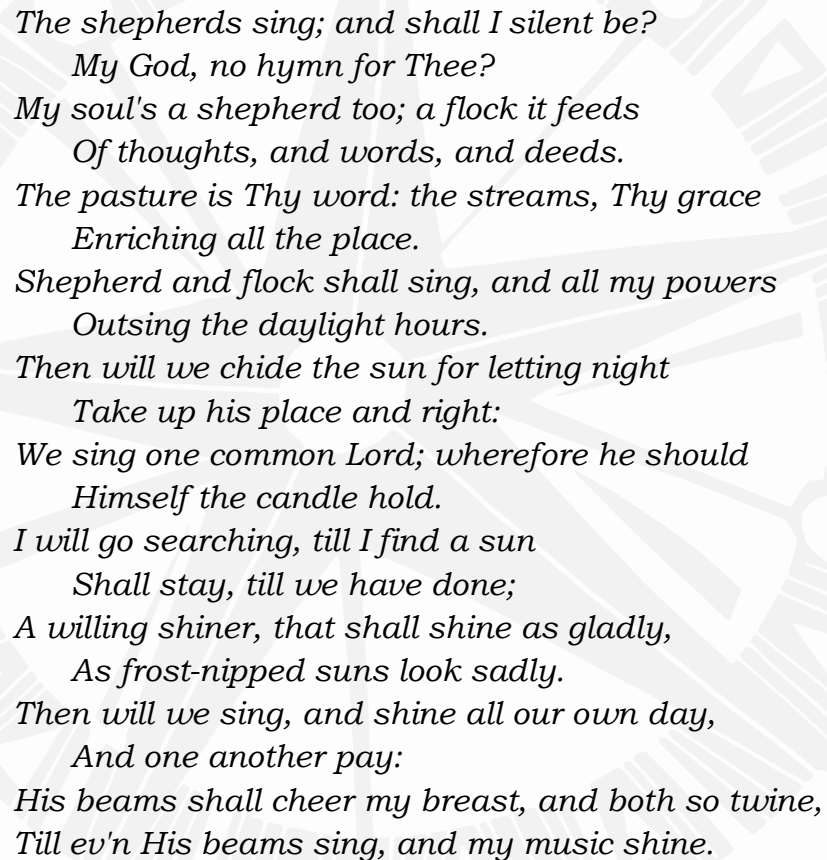
*There has fallen on earth for a token
A god too great for the sky.
He has burst out of all things and broken
The bounds of eternity:
Into time and the terminal land
He has strayed like a thief or a lover,
For the wine of the world brims over,
Its splendour is spilt on the sand.*

*Who is proud when the heavens are humble,
Who mounts if the mountains fall,
If the fixed stars topple and tumble
And a deluge of love drowns all—
Who rears up his head for a crown,
Who holds up his will for a warrant,
Who strives with the starry torrent,
When all that is good goes down?*

*For in dread of such falling and failing
The fallen angels fell
Inverted in insolence, scaling
The hanging mountain of hell:
But unmeasured of plummet and rod
Too deep for their sight to scan,
Outrushing the fall of man
Is the height of the fall of God.*

*Glory to God in the Lowest
The spout of the stars in spate—
Where thunderbolt thinks to be slowest
And the lightning fears to be late:
As men dive for sunken gem
Pursuing, we hunt and hound it,
The fallen star has found it
In the cavern of Bethlehem.*

—G.K. Chesterton,
“Gloria in Profundis”



*The shepherds sing; and shall I silent be?
My God, no hymn for Thee?
My soul's a shepherd too; a flock it feeds
Of thoughts, and words, and deeds.
The pasture is Thy word: the streams, Thy grace
Enriching all the place.
Shepherd and flock shall sing, and all my powers
Outsing the daylight hours.
Then will we chide the sun for letting night
Take up his place and right:
We sing one common Lord; wherefore he should
Himself the candle hold.
I will go searching, till I find a sun
Shall stay, till we have done;
A willing shiner, that shall shine as gladly,
As frost-nipped suns look sadly.
Then will we sing, and shine all our own day,
And one another pay:
His beams shall cheer my breast, and both so twine,
Till ev'n His beams sing, and my music shine.*

—George Herbert