



***CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE***  
***December 24, 2020***

**Our Redeemer Lutheran Church**

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**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE**  
**December 24, 2020**

**Lisa Dake, Organist**  
**Chris Ison, Media**  
**Kim Anderson, Church Secretary**  
**Rev. Melinda VanderSys, Pastor**

*It is our hope that you will be able to join in this service at 7:00 pm on December 24 via the church's Facebook page or website. If not, please join in as you are able.*

*Our Redeemer's website: <http://www.redeem-me.org/>  
Our Redeemer's Facebook page: **ORLC**  
(the one with the Luther rose)*



*\*The hymns will include an introduction and one verse.*

**Organ Prelude**

**“O Holy Night”**

**Welcome**

**Hymn**

**“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:

**Refrain**

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

**Call to Worship**

We gather together on this Blessed Christmas Eve in the name of the Father, and of the Son+, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**Reading      **Isaiah 9:2-7****

*This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!*

<sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>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.

**Prayer for Christmas Eve** *(Please join in prayer.)*

**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.**

**Hymn**           **“Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel”**

**Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the Son of God appear.**

***Refrain***

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to you, O Israel.**

**The Story of Jesus' Birth**

**Luke 2:1-21**

*God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the “good news of great joy” and proclaim God's blessing of peace.*

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

**Hymn**           **“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.**

(2)

<sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>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.

**Hymn**           **“Away in A Manger”**  
**Away in a manger, no crib for His bed,**  
**the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head;**  
**the stars in the sky looked down where He lay;**  
**the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>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: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,  
<sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

**Hymn**           **“Angels We Have Heard on High”**  
**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.**

<sup>15</sup>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.”

**Hymn**           **“Go Tell It on the Mountain”**  
***Refrain***       **Go tell it on the mountain,**  
**over the hills and ev'rywhere;**  
**go tell it on the mountain**  
**that Jesus Christ is born!**

**While shepherds kept their watching**  
**o'er silent flocks by night,**  
**behold, throughout the heavens**  
**there shone a holy light.   *Refrain***

<sup>16</sup>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; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

<sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**Hymn**                   **“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 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!"**

**Christmas Eve Message**

**Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior born in a stable in Bethlehem. Amen.**

How are you spending your Christmas this year? If your Christmases are usually spent alone, fixing a simple dinner, listening to Christmas music on the radio, or watching a special on the television, then your “usual” Christmas celebration is one most likely shared by millions around the world this year. Including myself and my husband.

Christmas this year is most likely different for every one of us. Because of the pandemic, many have chosen to forego the typical Christmas gatherings and continue to take the precautions recommended to reduce the prospect of contracting the coronavirus.

Health officials have pleaded with people for months to stay home as much as possible and stay safe. As one health official remarked, “You don’t want to be the last one to contract this virus right before a vaccine becomes available.”

As I type this sermon, a vaccine by Pfizer is being distributed in the United Kingdom. It is anticipated that the United States FDA will soon give authorization for Americans to use this vaccination as well. There is hope on the horizon! But we can’t begin celebrating yet. There is still much work to do and much more to learn.

So, at a time when our Christmas Eve Worship Services are virtual and those without technology may have difficulty seeing or hearing services altogether, it may be difficult to find joy.

I get discouraged. I get disappointed that things aren’t the way they were in the past. I get upset that so much has had to change because of the pandemic. And then I think of the hundreds of thousands of loved ones who have walked on due to this horrible virus. I think of their families who are facing their first Christmas without their loved ones.

And then I think back to Mary and Joseph, and how it was for them that first Christmas.

A difficult journey lay ahead of them. Joseph, a hard-working carpenter, had to leave his livelihood to register in his hometown some roughly 80-miles away. It was a good four-to-five days journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Most likely this long of a journey meant he wasn't getting paid while he was gone. That certainly could cause hardship.

Mary, this young woman expecting her first child, was far away from her parents and home and security. She would experience the pain and joy of birthing a child so far away from her mother and relatives. Only the one she was engaged to would be there to help her through childbirth. And what did Joseph know about childbirth?

We picture Mary riding on a donkey with Joseph walking beside her, yet there is no mention in the Bible that they could have afforded a donkey to make this long, exhaustive trip. Maybe they were fortunate to borrow one.

There were no fast-food restaurants along their travel to stop and grab a quick bite to eat. Their meals would have consisted of bread, herbs and oil, maybe some dried fish. Simple foods. They most likely wouldn't have taken time each day to make a fire and cook a big meal. They would have needed to carry water with them for this grueling journey. And they would have had to figure out how to carry enough water for the trip - with or without a donkey.

And then, when the time came for her to deliver her baby, there was no hospital around to provide natal care. There was no one she could ask if her birth pains were normal. The couple was isolated from others.

Finding the only place available, Mary gave birth to her precious child, the Son of God, the King of Kings, and laid him in a manger. Did she experience the same exhaustion other women have felt after giving birth? Did she struggle to breastfeed her baby like many women experience?

Jesus was born as a human in this human world. He would have cried like every other child. He would have needed diaper changing. Did Joseph help?

We often get so wrapped up in a visually-beautiful Christmas story that we don't think about the reality of the story. We forget that it wasn't all joy-filled. We forget that Mary and Joseph traveled a long way under difficult circumstances. They didn't have planes or trains or automobiles to make travel easier or quicker. They didn't have doctors and nurses and midwives to help with the delivery. They didn't even have a medical facility nearby.

And yet, despite all the hardships and struggles Mary and Joseph endured, these two inexperienced people experienced the most wonderful joy in the world. And, for that, we celebrate also!

Maybe Christmas will be different this year. Maybe we won't be able to celebrate how we always have in the past. But maybe this is the year we look at the *reality* of Christmas. The adversities, the isolation, and the pain of that first Christmas. And then we recognize our own adversities and isolation and pain we feel this year. And, like Mary and Joseph, still find some joy, that same joy found in that same manger in Bethlehem. Amen.

**Apostles' Creed** (please join in confessing our faith)

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.**

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

**He descended into hell.**

**On the third day He rose again.**

**He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**

**the holy catholic Church,**

**the communion of saints,**

**the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body,**

**and the life everlasting. Amen**

**Prayers of Intercession**

Joining our voices with the song of the angels, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need. *A brief silence.*

The shepherds sing, "Jesus Christ is born!" Let Your church throughout the world proclaim this good news, over the hills and everywhere. Unite the voices of all Your faithful people in songs of praise and rejoicing.

Heaven and nature sing, "Joy to the world!" Give respite to flocks, fields, and those who tend them. Come near to us in the beauty of nighttime, the shining of the stars, and the hush of a world at rest. May our wonder at Your creation rouse our care for all the earth.

The angels sing, "Peace on earth!" Come quickly to still the strife of this world. Hush the noise of war and violence in places of unrest. Inspire leaders of nations to seek lasting peace and sustainable provision for all in their care.

Mary sings melodies of comfort to her newborn child. Bring rest and reassurance to those facing struggles this night. Shelter travelers and those without homes. Console those who lie awake due to pain or anxiety. Heal those who are sick or hurting, especially those we name in our hearts, our minds, and with our voices at this time...(please name your prayer concerns).

Love sings through the sound of a new baby's cry. Bless new parents and expectant parents. Comfort those who long for children, especially those running out of hope or options. Surround families of every shape and size with your love and care.

The heavenly chorus sings, "Glory to God in the highest!" We give You thanks for all the saints who have proclaimed Your glory in word and deed. Let us join them this night in joyful praise around Your eternal throne.

God of mercy, come quickly to us with grace upon grace as we lift these and all our prayers to You, in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

**Sharing the Christmas Peace**

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

I invite you to share the Christmas Peace with those around you. If there is no one around you, please know that you are never alone. Christ is always with us!

**Offering**

As God has blessed us with many gifts, including the birth of the Christ Child this night, let us share our gifts with the church and with one another.\*

**Offertory Prayer** (please join in prayer)

**Gracious God, You came to us as one unknown, bringing joy and salvation to the earth. Nourish us at Your banquet table, that with all who welcome Your birth we may proclaim Your peace, revealed in Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.**

**Words of Institution**

In a moment, I will invite you to share in the Holy Communion elements you have available.

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.

**The Lord's Prayer**

I invite you to join in praying the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us...

**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 Holy Communion**

If you are celebrating Holy Communion using the pre-packaged elements provided by the church, please note there is a very thin film over the wafer. Gently lift the corner of the film and peel it back to uncover the wafer. Please note that there is a thicker film over the cup of wine/grape juice.

At this time, I invite you to receive your wafer in joy as I share these words:  
The body of Christ given for you.

And now I invite you to receive your cup of wine or grape juice hearing these words:  
The blood of Christ shed for you.

And now may the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace. **Amen.**

**Prayer after Communion** (please join in prayer)

**We give You thanks, gracious God, that You have once again fed us from Your very self with the body and blood of Christ. Through this mystery, send us forth to proclaim Your promise to a world in need, through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

**Candle Preparation**

Please prepare to light your candle.

**The Gospel of Incarnation John 1:1-14**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in Him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him; yet the world did not know Him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was His own, and His own people did not accept Him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

**Candle Lighting**

Please light your candle and join our carolers in singing all three verses of "Silent Night, Holy Night!"

**Hymn Silent Night, Holy Night!**

**1 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.**

**2 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!**

**3 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.**

You may extinguish your candle if it is a wax candle or feel free to keep it lit if it is a battery-operated candle.

**Benediction**

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you with favor and grant you peace; in the name of God the Father, God the Son+, and God the Spirit that makes us one. **Amen.**

**Hymn**           **“Joy to the World”**

**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.**

**Dismissal**

Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.   **Thanks be to God.**

**Postlude**

**Glory Be to the Heav'n Born King**

**John Ylvisaker**

**Sources:**

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**Announcements**

A Christmas Eve Day Service (Dec. 24) will be broadcast on AM 1450 WNBX at 1:45pm and on Christmas Day (Dec. 25) at 8:35 am.

A special thank you is extended to our choir and families for sharing in the music this evening.

\*You may send your Christmas offering to ORLC, P.O. Box 473, Newberry, MI 49868, or online at [www.myEoffering.com](http://www.myEoffering.com) Thank you for your contributions!

**Special Christmas Offerings in lieu of Christmas Poinsettias**

Don and Jo Ann Hautala

In Memory of Tina Heino

Ramona MacPhee

In Memory of Frances Thompson, Roy Nelson and Roy N. Powell

Rev. Melinda and Doug VanderSys

In Honor and Appreciation of our Congregational Members

**May you and your family have a Blessed Christmas And a Joyous New Year!**