



Welcome to Messiah

We are a community of grace where we live out Jesus' commandment to love God with our whole heart and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We also seek to be a welcoming community for all people. This includes people of every race, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnic background, economic grouping, religious affiliation, and political persuasion. We do this simply because God created all people in God's own image and Christ Jesus came so all people might have abundant life. We may not always be perfect, but this is our intention--all are welcome!

Christmas Eve

December 24, 2023

4:00 pm

Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church

HYMN SING

As we gather, we join our voices together in three hymns before the start of worship

#257 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

- 1 O come, O 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.

- 3 O come, O come, O Lord of might,
as to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times you gave the law
in cloud, and majesty, and awe. *Refrain*

- 6 O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;
O Sun of justice, now draw near.
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadow put to flight. *Refrain*

Repeat verse 1 Refrain

#266 "All Earth Is Hopeful"

- 1 All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last!
Furrows lie open for God's creative task:
this, the labor of people who struggle to see
how God's truth and justice set ev'rybody free.
- 2 People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell:
"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel";
she conceived him, "God with us,"

our brother, whose birth
restores hope and courage to children of this earth.

3 Mountains and valleys will have to be prepared;
new highways opened, new protocols declared.
Almost here! God is nearing, in beauty and grace!
All clear ev'ry gateway, in haste, come out in haste!

4 We first saw Jesus a baby in a crib.
This same Lord Jesus today has come to live
in our world; he is present, in neighbors we see
our Jesus is with us, and ever sets us free

#300 "The First Noel"

1 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.

Refrain Noel, Noel, Noel, Noell!
Born is the King of Israel.

2 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. *Refrain*

3 And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went. *Refrain*

4 This star drew near to the northwest,
o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
and there it did both stop and stay
right over the place where Jesus lay. *Refrain*

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING HYMN

#283 "O Come all Ye Faithful"

1 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!

2 The highest, most holy,
light of light eternal,
born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;
Son of the Father
now in flesh appearing! *Refrain*

4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!
Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing: *Refrain*

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

How does a weary world hold onto hope, practice peace, spread joy, or know love?
How does a weary world combat cruelty?
How does a weary world shine a light into our bleakest night?

**We do all these things with God's help.
For tonight, a child is born in Bethlehem.
Tonight, Christ draws near.
Tonight, we light the Christ Candle.
Tonight, we are not alone.
God is near. Love has drawn close.
Rejoice! For God loves this weary world.
Amen.**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

The prayer of confession tonight will be a kinesthetic prayer, which means we will use both our hearts and our bodies to pray. I invite you to join me in prayer, responding with actions as you are prompted.

Let us pray.

Before Jesus was born, Joseph showed radical grace to Mary at a time when many would have shunned her in their disbelief. If you have ever failed to show grace to yourself or another, please close your eyes.

On the night of Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph struggled to find a place to lay their heads.

*Please
stand
as you
are
comfort-
able in
body or
spirit*

If you, like the people of Bethlehem, have ever withheld hospitality to those within reach, please cross your arms.

On the night of Jesus' birth, the wise men traveled long and far, trying to get to Jesus. If you have ever let your faith take a passive, backseat position in your life, failing to take the steps necessary to deepen your faith, please bow your head.

Family of God, this is what sin feels like—being cut off from one another, in the dark, disconnected, and alone. However, we worship a redeeming God who pursues us even in our absence. Therefore, if you, like the shepherds, have ever looked for God's love in this world, open your eyes.

If you, like Mary, have ever treasured your neighbor as a gift from God, raise your head.

If you, like Joseph, have ever forgiven yourself or someone else, uncross your arms, and look to the person near to you.

And if your head is still bowed, your eyes still closed, or your arms still crossed, open and uncross them—for you are forgiven by the grace of God.

Friends, this is what the Kingdom of God feels like—heads up, eyes open, connected, forgiven, and known. Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.

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.**

HYMN

#270 "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

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*

- 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*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Loving God, We have heard this story before— the story of a star in the sky and a baby who was laid in a manger. We have heard this story before— passed down in hopeful whispers through the generations. So this night, as we lean our hearts and our ears closer to you, we ask that you would make room in our souls to hear this story again. Make room in us for awe. Make room in us for wonder. Make room for heartache and compassion. Make room in our hearts for you. Pull us into the narrative, that we might hear the truths in this ancient Word as if it were the first time. For we know that you are still speaking. So speak to us again this night. We are listening. We are already making room. **Amen.**

HYMN

#277 “Away in a Manger”

- 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.
- 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.

GOSPEL

Luke 2:1-20

Glory to you O Lord

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor

of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph 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. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And 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.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth 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 heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

¹⁵When 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.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The Gospel of our Lord, **Praise to you O Christ.**

INTERACTIVE SERMON

HYMN

#267 “Joy to the World”

*Please
be
seated*

- 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.

- 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.

*Please
stand
as you
are
comfort-
able in
body or
spirit*

CHRISTMAS CREED

**I believe in Jesus Christ
and in the power of the Gospel,
which began in Bethlehem.**

**I believe in the one whose spirit glorified a small village,
of whose coming the shepherds saw the sign,
and for whom there was not room in the inn.**

**I believe in the one whose life changed the course of history,
for whom the kings of the earth had no power,
and who was not understood by the proud.**

**I believe in the one whom the poor,
the oppressed, the sick,
gave welcome and accepted as Lord and Savior.**

**I believe in peace, reconciliation, forgiveness,
and the transforming power of the Gospel.**

**I believe that Christmas is strength and power,
and that this world can change
if with humility and with faith
we kneel before the manger.**

I believe that I must be the first to do so. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Thank you, God, for the joys of this season. Thank you for the candle lighting and the carol singing. Thank you for the bells ringing and the community gathering. Thank you for turning ordinary moments into holy reminders of your gospel promise. God of Hope, **hear our prayer.**

We are surrounded by so many gifts and we do not want to miss the opportunity to express Gratitude. However, despite the abundant gifts of this season, we also acknowledge the heartache of this season, and we bring those prayers to you as well. So Holy God, For individuals who long to be parents like Mary and Joseph but find themselves facing infertility or loss—be with them. For those who feel like they are going

through the motions of faith but still feel far from you—be with them. For those who 8
see the joy of this season, but cannot ignore the weariness in their hearts—be with
them. God of Peace, **hear our prayer.**

God, we could go on and on with our prayers of both gratitude and lament. The world
is joyful and weary, and on either side of that coin, we long to tether ourselves to you.
So meet us once again in the ordinary rituals of our faith—rituals like praying, singing,
studying scripture, and gathering with community. Meet us at the Table and the Font.
Meet us in the pews and in the Sunday school classrooms. Meet us when we pray be-
fore meals and when we pray before bed. Holy God, we don't care where you find us,
we just ask that you would—over and over and over again. God of Joy, **hear our
prayer.**

As we meet you in this Holy night, we promise that like Mary and Joseph we will do
our best to bring our weary and hopeful spirits back to your temple, back to you. God
of Love, **hear our prayer.**

God of this holy night when we await your coming into the world receive our prayers
according to your abundant grace. **Amen.**

PEACE

The Peace of the newborn Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

HYMN

#294 “In the Bleak Midwinter”

*Please be
seated*

*Please
stand as
you are
comforta-
ble in
body or
spirit*

- 1 In the bleak midwinter,
frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow,
snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter,
long ago.
- 2 Heaven cannot hold him,
nor earth sustain;
heav'n and earth shall flee away
when he comes to reign;
in the bleak midwinter
a stable place sufficed
the Lord God almighty,
Jesus Christ.

- 3 What can I give him,
 poor as I am?
 If I were a shepherd
 I would bring a lamb;
 if I were a wise man
 I would do my part;
 yet what I can I give him—
 give my heart.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Source of Love— They gave you gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold, because gold is for Kings. Frankincense, because frankincense was an scent for the gods. And myrrh, because even though you were divine, you were also human, and myrrh was the oil of death. We do not have gold, frankincense or myrrh here tonight, so today we give you our time, our hearts, our talents, and our money. We give you what we can. So we pray— Take these gifts, use them for your good, and mold in us more generous hearts. Gratefully we pray, **Amen.**

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to you, Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to praise you, Lord.

we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Emmanuel, God with us

We want to sing like Mary sang,

until all who are looking for you have found their way to the gift of Christ.

Help us live like the shepherds

—who weren't afraid to go and tell the good news.

Help us take the words of the angels to heart

—to not be afraid.

Help us to be as trusting as Joseph

—who chose to believe the impossible.

But more than anything, give us the courage and conviction to share this story with a hurting world so desperate for hope.

So pour out your Spirit in this meal.

Strengthen us from the inside out.

Give us your grace and send us out into the world.

Emmanuel, God with us

Help us to proclaim: Your light has come into the world

and the darkness shall not overcome it. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

All are welcome to the Lord's Table. Communion will be served by intinction where you may dip the bread into the wine or ask for gluten free/ grape juice. Children are also welcome to the Table. If you would prefer to receive a blessing instead of communion please cross your arms over your chest.

*Please
be
seated*

COMMUNION HYMNS *All can be found in the cranberry hymnal in your pew*

#292 "Love Has Come"

#269 "Once In Royal David's City"

#279 "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

#287 "Good Christian Friends Rejoice"

*Please
stand
as you
are
comfort-
able in
body or
spirit.*

POST COMMUNION PRAYER AND BLESSING

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

#281 "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. *(sung twice)*

- 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! (*sung twice*)
- 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. (*sung twice*)

THE BENEDICTION

May the love that made the stars, be your guiding light.
 May the love revealed in Jesus, be your hope and inspiration;
 And may the love of the ever-present Spirit,
 give you courage, joy, and hope, now and for ever. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN

#290 "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!
- 1 While shepherds kept their watching
 o'er silent flocks by night,
 behold, throughout the heavens
 there shone a holy light. *Refrain*
- 2 The shepherds feared and trembled
 when, lo, above the earth
 rang out the angel chorus
 that hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain*
- 3 Down in a lonely manger
 the humble Christ was born;
 and God sent us salvation
 that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain*

SENDING

Go in peace, Christ is born! **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

Liturgist::	Pr. Andrew Plocher
Liturgist::	Pr. Molly Hunter
Pianist/Organist:	Kathy Strazzinki
Ushers:	Larry Pagel, Linda Berry
Communion Assistants:	Laura Tripp, Lydia Tripp, Kathy Godec, Rebecca Ulland
Audio Technician:	Dan Zini
Streaming Technician:	Traci Zini
Projection Technician:	Terri Bocklund
Nursery Attendant:	Jamie Dodge

Acknowledgements:

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**If you wish to designate your
donation to a specific fund, please be
sure to do so. Any undesignated
donations automatically go to our
general fund which supports the
entirety of our ministry.**

Thank you for your generosity!

**Messiah Evangelical
Lutheran Church**

@messiahlutheranmqt



venmo

Worship with us again!

- ♦ Saturdays at 5:00 pm in-person in the atrium
- ♦ Sundays 8:30 am in-person, on the radio at 101.9 FM, and live-streamed on Facebook, Vimeo, and YouTube
- ♦ Sundays at 10:30 am in-person and live-streamed.



***An open & affirming congregation.
All are welcome. No exceptions.***



305 W. Magnetic St.
Marquette, MI 49855
906.225.1119
www.messiahlutheranmqt.org

