



### 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

7:30 pm

Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church

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## PRELUDE

## 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*

- 3 Sing, choirs of angels,  
sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God  
in the highest: *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*

*Please  
stand in  
body or  
spirit as  
you are  
comfortable*

*The  
presiding  
minister  
will read  
the plain  
print.*

*The  
congregation  
is invited  
to read  
the  
print in  
bold*

## **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**

Loving Christ, Scripture tells us that you were placed in a manger among livestock and hay because there was no place in the guest room.

**The space was full, and yet—  
your parents made room.**

Scripture tells us that shepherds arrived from the fields beyond town.

**The space was full, and yet—  
they made room.**

Scripture tells us that Mary pondered what the shepherds had to say.

**Her heart was full, and yet—  
she made room.**

Together we confess,  
**Too often we assume there is no more room.  
Too often we choose exclusion and close off our hearts.  
Teach us how to make room for one another.  
Teach us how to make room for you.  
Carve out space in our hearts to love as you love,  
for we do not want to build hostility here.  
We want to build your promised day.  
Guide us forward.**

The angels say, "Be not afraid," but they also say, "Unto you a child is born."

Christ is born for you.  
 Christ walked this earth for you.  
 Christ forgives you.  
 That's what love does.  
 It makes room. It offers grace. It learns your name.  
 So repeat these words of hope after me:  
 Unto us a child is born.  
**Unto us a child is born.**  
 Unto us grace is given.  
**Unto us grace is given.**  
 May this good news change the very fabric of our lives.  
**Christ has made room for all of us. 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

### #289 "Angels We Have Heard on High"

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*

3 Come to Bethlehem and see  
 him whose birth the angels sing;  
 come, adore on bended knee  
 Christ the Lord, the newborn king. *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.**

*Please  
be  
seated.*

## FIRST READING

**Luke 1:26-33, 46-56**

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup> But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup> He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said,  
 "My soul magnifies the Lord,  
<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
<sup>48</sup> for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.  
 Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
 and holy is his name.  
<sup>50</sup> His mercy is for those who fear him  
 from generation to generation.  
<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm;  
 he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
<sup>52</sup> He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
 and lifted up the lowly;  
<sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things,  
 and sent the rich away empty.  
<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel,  
 in remembrance of his mercy,  
<sup>55</sup> according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
 to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

## HYMN

## #270 "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"<sup>5</sup>

- 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*

## SECOND READING

## Luke 2:1-7

**2** In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be 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. <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**#277 “Away in a Manger”<sup>6</sup>

- 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.

**THIRD READING****Luke 2:8-20**

<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!”

<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.” <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> 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.

**SERMON****Pastor Andrew Plocher****HYMN**

#267 “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.

*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

8

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 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 before 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.**

## SPECIAL MUSIC

“The Star Carol” *Messiah's Celebration Choir*

## 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

*Please be  
seated*

*Please  
stand as  
you are  
comfortable in  
body or  
spirit*



pray— Take these gifts, use them for your good, and mold in us more generous hearts.<sup>9</sup>  
Gratefully we pray, **Amen.**

## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

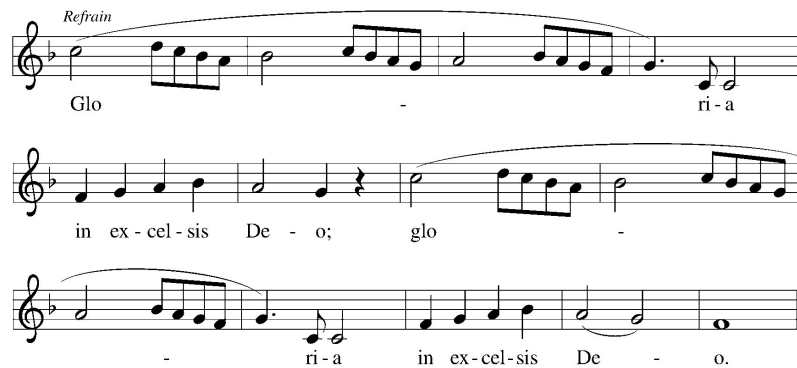
Lift up your hearts.

**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 hymns can be found in the cranberry hymnal in your pew*

**#294 "In the Bleak Midwinter"**

**#292 "Love Has Come"**

**#300 "The First Noel"**

**#279 "O Little Town of Bethlehem"**

*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

11

Family of faith, as you leave this place, you go into a weary world— so speak tenderly. Do the good that is yours to do. Choose connection. Hold onto hope. And remember that Christ took on flesh for you. You are God's beloved. So go rejoicing. The world needs it. **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

Preacher:	Pr. Andrew Plocher
Liturgist:	Pr. Molly Hunter
Ushers:	Mike Coyne, Ruth Robb
Communion Assistants:	Kerry McGinley, Karen Burkman, Gayle Mack
Songleader:	Sara Parks
Musicians:	Eric Banitt, Jason Parks, Darren Smith, Tom Bronken
Audio Technician:	Dan Zini
Streaming Technician:	Traci Zini
Projection Technician:	Lesley Williams
Nursery Attendant:	Maddie Dykema

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general fund which supports the  
entirety of our ministry.**

**Thank you for your generosity!**

**Messiah Evangelical  
Lutheran Church**

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**venmo**

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**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.***

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