

Christ Lutheran Church & The Bridge Campus Ministry

December 24, 2025 – Christmas Eve

Connecting people to people • people to faith • faith to life

69 Mill Street • Athens, OH • (740) 593-3144

info@clcathens.org • www.clcathens.org

(PLEASE POWER OFF OR AIRPLANE MODE YOUR DEVICES)

Here in Athens, in SE Ohio, we are occupying the traditional homeland of the Shawnee people. Before the Shawnee, this land was occupied by the Osage people, and by the Adena, Hopewell, and Fort Ancient cultures.



SERVING TONIGHT: *Presider/Preacher: Chad Huebner; Organist: George Weckman; Choir Director: Christian Yoder; Choir Accompanist: Donnalee Yoder; Pianist: Patricia Cambridge; Lector: Jane Unger; Time with Children: Jana Hovland; Ushers: Nick Claussen, Jim Sillery; Greeter: Solveig Spjeldnes; Acolyte: Dessa; Tray Server: Tammy Thompson; Livestream: Sam Hanson*

INTRODUCTION

In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.

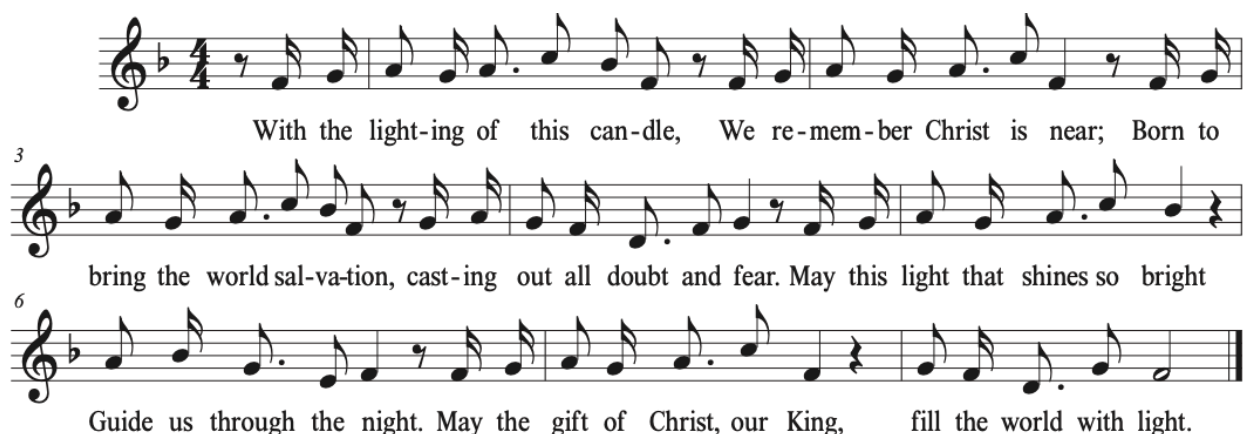
PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

Our Souls magnify the Lord,
and our spirits rejoice in God our Savior,
God has done great things. Holy is God's name!
God's mercy is for all who fear the Lord,
God's love from generation to generation!

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH *Forever Bright*

David Joshua Aaron



With the light-ing of this can-dle, We re-mem-ber Christ is near; Born to
bring the world sal-va-tion, cast-ing out all doubt and fear. May this light that shines so bright
Guide us through the night. May the gift of Christ, our King, fill the world with light.

We light these candles so everyone can see.
Christ the Lord, our Savior, was born for you and me.
May the light of these candles shine brightly in our hearts
So that we may share the Good News in the world and all its parts

Repeat vs. 5 of Forever Bright

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray.

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

Amen.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful (ELW 283)

Oh, come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!
Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him born the king of angels:

Refrain

*Oh, come, let us adore him, oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*

*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*

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

Narrator: Long before the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and hosts of angels announced his birth, the people of Israel heard the prediction of the coming Messiah; listen to these words from the Old Testament Prophet.

Isaiah 9:1-2, 5-6

1 But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

2 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.

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

6 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.

Narrator: In this reading, the prophet Isaiah tells of a wonderful Savior sent by God to bring a suffering people from darkness to light. Isaiah sees it as a child being born, a son, who will bring peace and justice to the world. The writer of this passage lived long before Jesus, and his ideas were shaped by the history of the suffering of the people of Israel, but his words are prophetic of what God did in Jesus and apply to how we think about His coming into the world.

God would send an angel to visit the young woman who would bear this savior foretold in Isaiah. But first, he appeared to her cousin Elizabeth, who was barren, to tell her of a wondrous happening.

Luke 1:5-15

5 In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was descended from the daughters of Aaron, and her name

was Elizabeth. 6 Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. 7 But they had no children because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

8 Once when he was serving as priest before God during his section's turn of duty, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to offer incense. 10 Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. 11 Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified, and fear overwhelmed him. 13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. 14 You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Narrator: Zechariah wanted to have a child. He and Elizabeth had likely prayed to God about it often. The angel came with the news that God had heard those prayers, and Elizabeth would give birth to a son. But Zechariah must give the name John to that child instead of a family name as the Lord God commanded. John in the Hebrew language combines the name of God with the word for kindness. Therefore, John means 'the Lord has been kind'. God sent the power of the Holy Spirit to be in John even before his birth because John would announce Jesus to the world at the time his ministry began.

ANTHEM

When The Lord of Love Was Born

CLC Choir

Narrator: Mary, young and unmarried, is visited by the angel Gabriel who gives her some startling news.

We are told that an angel, God's messenger, came to Mary, a young woman engaged to a man called Joseph, and told her that she had found special favor with God. Because of this, God asked her to conceive a child, a son, Jesus, who has a unique destiny as the Son of God. Mary asks how this is supposed to happen since she is a virgin, but the angel says that God will make it possible. Mary still has to agree, however. Almost without pause, Mary obeys what God asks of her and says that she will become Jesus' mother. Thus, in a sense, Mary becomes the first disciple, filled with faith and trust in God.

After hearing the news about her cousin Elizabeth, Mary travels to Judah to visit her.

Luke 1:39-45

39 In those days, Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Narrator: Mary was pledged to marry Joseph, and now she was with child through the Holy Spirit. This is a troubling problem for the young man. But God once again sends Gabriel, this time to soothe Joseph's fears.

Matthew 1:19-24

19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. 20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"
which means, "God is with us." 24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife

Narrator: Just as Mary answered God's call, so did Joseph. It was a very bold and brave decision, considering the times in which they lived. Nonetheless, again like Mary, Joseph with faith and trust in God agreed to marry the young mother to be.

However, Mary's child would not be born in Nazareth. The Roman ruler made sure of that.

O Little Town of Bethlehem (ELW 279)

*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.*

*For Christ is born of Mary, and, gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!*

*O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
Oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!*

Luke 2:1-6

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 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. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.

CHILD OF THE POOR/WHAT CHILD IS THIS

What Child Is This by William C. Dix, 1827–1898
Child Of The Poor by Scott Soper

GREENSLEEVES, 8 7 8 7 with refrain
16th Century English Melody
Child Of The Poor by Scott Soper

Child Of The Poor

VERSES 1 & 2: Cantor/Choir

1. Helpless and hungry, lowly, afraid,
wrapped in the chill of mid-winter;
comes now among us, born into poverty's embrace,
new life for the world.

Who is this who lives with the lowly,
sharing their sorrows, knowing their hunger?
This is Christ, revealed to the world
in the eyes of a child,
a child of the poor. (to *What Child Is This Verse 1*)

2. Who is the stranger here in our midst,
looking for shelter among us?
Who is the outcast? Who do we see amid the poor,
the children of God?

Who is this who lives with the lowly,
sharing their sorrows, knowing their hunger?
This is Christ, revealed to the world
in the eyes of a child,
a child of the poor. (to *What Child Is This Verse 2*)

What Child Is This

Assembly:



1. What child is this, _____ who, laid to rest, _____ on
2. Why lies he in _____ such mean es - tate _____ where
3. So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh, _____ come

Text and music to Child Of The Poor © 1993, OCP, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213. All rights reserved.

CHILD OF THE POOR/WHAT CHILD IS THIS (Continued)



1. Ma - ry's lap ___ is sleep - ing? Whom an - gels greet ___ with
2. ox and ass ___ are feed - ing? Good Chris - tian, fear, ___ for
3. peas - ant, king, ___ to own ___ him; the King of kings ___ sal -



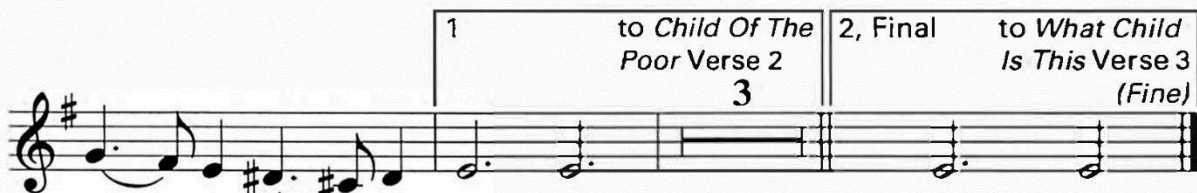
1. an - thems sweet, ___ while shep - herds watch ___ are keep - ing?
2. sin - ners here ___ the si - lent word ___ is plead - ing.
3. va - tion brings, ___ let lov - ing hearts ___ en - throne him.



This, this ___ is Christ the King, ___ whom shep - herds guard ___ and



an - gels sing; Haste, haste ___ to bring him laud, ___ the



babe, ___ the son ___ of Ma - ry.

Ma - ry.

VERSE 3: Cantor/Choir sings over Assembly

3. Bring all the thirsty, all who seek peace;
bring those with nothing to offer.
Strengthen the feeble, say to the frightened heart:
"Fear not: here is your God!"

Who is this who lives with the lowly,
sharing their sorrows, knowing their hunger?
This is Christ, revealed to the world
in the eyes of a child,
a child of the poor.

Narrator: St Luke sets the birth in the middle of a census, explaining how Jesus (whose family came from Nazareth) ended up being born in Bethlehem. Joseph takes his pregnant wife Mary to Bethlehem to comply with the Roman Emperor's ruling (Israel was occupied by the Romans at this time) and during this process Mary goes into labor and gives birth to Jesus. Because of the large numbers of people coming to the town obeying the order, the inns are full and so Mary has to give birth in a stable, or perhaps a cave in the vicinity and Jesus is wrapped up and placed to sleep in a feeding trough for the animals. The Son of God is born, not to riches and honor, but into poverty and squalor. The birth of this child did not go unannounced. One special group received the news in this way.

Luke 2:8-20

8 Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 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: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13 And 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!"

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

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (ELW 270)

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

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

Narrator: The messenger angel of God visits some shepherds out in the hillsides and tells them that Jesus has been born. They are not special but rather ordinary people, and the message to them is to be happy because Jesus has come to be a Savior for people just like them. The angel tells them that they can see this for themselves by finding a new born baby, not in a house or some lovely palace, but in a manger for the animals. The shepherds go to see if what the angel said is true, and so they find Mary and Joseph and Jesus, who is indeed lying in a manger.

Away in a Manger (ELW 277)

*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.*

*The cattle are lowing; the poor baby wakes,
But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.*

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Good and gracious God, on this holy night, you gave us your Son, wrapped in swaddling clothes, the Savior of all, lying in a manger. On this holy night, draw us into the mystery of your love. Join our voices with the heavenly host, that we may sing your glory on high. Give us a place among the shepherds, that we may find the one for whom we have waited.

Let us pray for the Church around the world as it celebrates the birth of Christ. Bless all those who are entrusted with Christian ministry that your Word might be proclaimed with truth and courage everywhere.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Bestow your wisdom on all who govern, that in honoring the earth and its diverse races, cultures, and religions, we may all celebrate this holy night.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Grant reconciliation to those surrounded with war, conflict and violence, that they may live in the peace of this holy night.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for all who are cold, hungry, or alone this night. Embrace with your tender care all who wander alone or have no place to lay their head, that they may experience the hope of this holy night.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for all who are anxious, depressed, or ill. Draw near to those who find this season a source of pain or grief, and we pray especially for those we remember now, either in our hearts or aloud..... Let them feel the comfort of this holy night.....

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for parents, families, and newborn infants. Strengthen families in the bonds of love and commitment, that they may delight in the joy of this holy night.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for ourselves and for the blessings of Christmas. Open our hearts to your presence, that we may be transformed by the new birth of this holy night.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Let us give thanks for all the faithful departed. Give us grace to follow their example in lives of faith and commitment, that we may join with the hosts of heaven in singing the praises of this holy night.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, grant us, O God, for the sake of him who died and rose again, and now lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **AMEN**

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

OFFERING – THANK YOU! YOUR GENEROSITY MAKES OUR MINISTRY POSSIBLE.

Giving is easy online through our website at <https://www.clcathens.org/give>

You will also find instructions for texting to give or downloading our church app!

The offering for tonight's service will, together with the offerings from Advent evening prayer, go to The Gathering Place to support their efforts to provide for the unhoused in our community. Thank you for your generosity.

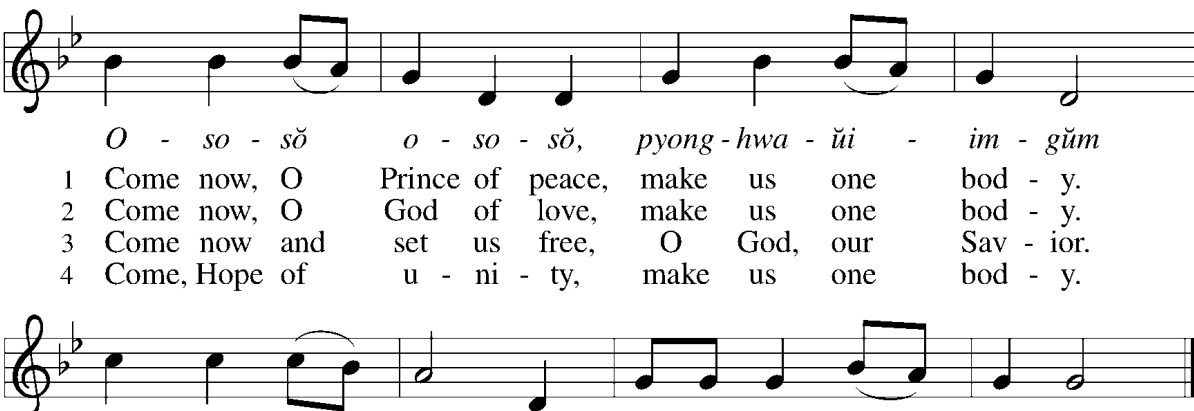
CHORAL OFFERING

Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming

CLC Choir


OFFERTORY

Come Now, O Prince of Peace



O - so - sŏ o - so - sŏ, pyong - hwa - ũi - im - gŭm

1 Come now, O Prince of peace, make us one bod - y.
2 Come now, O God of love, make us one bod - y.
3 Come now and set us free, O God, our Sav - ior.
4 Come, Hope of u - ni - ty, make us one bod - y.



u - ri - ga han - mom i - ru - ge ha - so - sŏ.

Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.
Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.
Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile all na - tions.
Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile all na - tions.

Text: Geonyong Lee, b. 1947; tr. Marion Pope
Music: OSOSŎ, Geonyong Lee, b. 1947
Text and music © Geonyong Lee

OFFERING PRAYER

Blessed are you,

God of all creation. Through your goodness, we have these gifts to share. Receive our offerings, and nourish us at your table, that your Word may take flesh in our lives; for the sake of him who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places...
...we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

(sung to the tune of: "Hark the Herald Angels Sing")

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of heav'n and earth adored. O how blest is he who comes in the holy name of God. Joyful, all you nations rise; join the triumph of the skies; With angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!" Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks...
...shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Here is life. God is with us.
Come, receive what God has promised.
Thanks be to God!

COMMUNION

ALL are invited to the Lord's table. To receive communion, come forward at the direction of the ushers and take a place at the altar rail. You may stand or kneel as you wish. You will first receive the bread, then you may choose to receive either red wine or white grape juice in a small glass, or sip wine from the chalice. If you choose a small glass, you will place it in the empty tray carried by the acolyte. After receiving the bread and wine, you will return to your seat.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God our host,
at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness.
Send us forth, eager to share the feast,
welcome the stranger,
and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus.
Amen.

Service of Light

(The minister lights a candle, which symbolizes Christ, the Light of the world, of whom John's gospel speaks. During the hymn, as the minister processes the lit candle around the sanctuary, pass the light on to spread the light of Christ throughout the sanctuary and through you, into the whole world. (Always keep the lit candle upright.)

Hymn of Light: Silent Night, Holy Night! (ELW 281)

*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.*

*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!*

*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.*

Proclamation of the Birth of Christ

Blessing

May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ Child. Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. Amen.

The lights are extinguished.

Joy to the World (ELW 267)

- 1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive its King; Let ev'ry heart prepare him room 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*
- 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...*
- 4. He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love...*

Dismissal

Go in peace to worship the newborn King! **Thanks be to God!**

Thank you to those who gave Poinsettias in honor or memory of loved ones to decorate our sanctuary this Christmas:

JoAnn Pulfer	In memory of Russ Pulfer
Sam and Adele Hanson	In honor of Their Parents
Rod and Linda Sauer	In memory of Linda's sister, Vicki Baldwin
Jane Milhorn	In memory of Rev. Henry Milhorn
Stephen Chikosky	In memory of Karen Chikosky and In honor of Lilian & Audrey Morar
Fran Snyder	In memory of Larry & Mark Snyder
Marilyn Shealy	In memory of Her Parents
Linda Batey	
Nancy Wood	In honor and thanks for Mim & Merl Almquist