

St. Peter's Lutheran Church  
Highspire  
Christmas Day  
December 25, 2025

## **Introduction**

As on the first day of creation, on this Christmas Day the Word illumines the world, shining forth to bring all things into being. Today we celebrate the incarnate Word, God becoming flesh to live among us in the person of Jesus Christ then and now. Emboldened by the good news of Christ's birth, along with the shepherds, Mary and Joseph, and all witnesses to the light of Christ, we declare to the world that we have indeed seen and been transformed by the arrival of "the salvation of our God." O come, let us adore!

## **Overview**

### **Traces of Light**

"The light shines in the darkness." We know the darkness—even in the merriment of Christmas we need not travel too far to see it. When the prophet Isaiah proclaimed words echoed in our reading, he did not need to go into too much detail as to what the darkness was. This was the darkness of the battlefield, of war and captivity. Our daily headlines remind us of today's darkness, which Henri Nouwen says "is so visible and tangible . . . that it is often difficult to believe that there is much to think, speak, or write about other than our brokenness" (Life of the Beloved, New York: Crossroad, 1992, p. 69).

But it is into this brokenness that the life and light of the world descends, not to terrify or shame it, but to create it anew. From the beginning this Word was active in creation, speaking obliquely to every culture and era, until the particular time of incarnation. God risks vulnerability in order to reach out to the wounded, and places in creation's trust the caretaking of a fragile grace. Will the world receive him?

The rest of the story will painfully answer this question. Events at Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha will dramatically declare our rejection of the life and light of the world. But the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it. We wrestle with the paradox that the world did not recognize its own light by which it sees, or its own life from which it has life, or the Word that gives it meaning. Yet we also treasure the wonder by which we have been granted eyes to see and ears to hear. At Christmas we perceive the light in infancy, but, grace upon grace, he is a trace of joy given for us.

WORDS OF WELCOME  
PRELUDE

Arthur Berg

### **The Gathering**

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

\*Blessing of the Nativity

**P O God, bless us who gather around this stable. As we celebrate Christ's birth into the world, may we receive the Christ child into our hearts with gratitude and song.**

C Amen.

\*GATHERING HYMN Joy to The World

ELW #267

\*PRAYER OF THE DAY

**P All-powerful and unseen God, the coming of your light into our world has brightened weary hearts with peace. Call us out of darkness, and empower us to proclaim the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.**

C Amen.

### **The Word**

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

**First Reading: Isaiah 52:7-10**

*The prophet invites the people to give God no rest until God reestablishes Jerusalem. In turn, they will receive names full of promise: The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord, A City Not Forsaken.*

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet  
of the messenger who announces peace, who  
brings good news, who announces salvation,  
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

8 Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices; together  
they shout for joy, for in plain sight they see

the return of the Lord to Zion.

9 Break forth; shout together for joy, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

L The word of the Lord.

**C Thanks be to God.**

**Psalm: Psalm 98** (read responsively)

*All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God. (Ps. 98:3)*

1 Sing a new song to the Lord, who has done marvelous things, whose right hand and holy arm have won the victory.

**2 O Lord, you have made known your victory,  
you have revealed your righteousness in the sight of  
the nations.**

3 You remember your steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel;

all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

**4 Shout with joy to the Lord, all you lands;  
lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.**

5 Sing to the Lord with the harp,  
with the harp and the voice of song.

**6 With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
shout with joy before the king, the Lord.**

7 Let the sea roar, and all that fills it,  
the world and those who dwell therein.

**8 Let the rivers clap their hands,  
and let the hills ring out with joy before the Lord,  
who comes to judge the earth.**

9 The Lord will judge the world with righteousness  
and the peoples with equity.

## **Second Reading: Hebrews 1:1-4 [5-12]**

*This letter opens with a lofty declaration of Jesus' preeminent status as the Son through whom God created the world and through whom our sins are cleansed. God speaks to us now through the Son, who is exalted even above the angels.*

1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. 3 He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

[5 For to which of the angels did God ever say,

    "You are my Son; today I have begotten you"?

Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?

6 And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,

    "Let all God's angels worship him."

7 Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds and his servants flames of fire."

8 But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom.

9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;

    therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

10 And, "In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth,

    and the heavens are the work of your hands;

11 they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing;

12 like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end." ]

L The word of the Lord.

**C Thanks be to God.**

\*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION  
Angels We Have Heard On High

ELW #289  
vs. 1

**\*GOSPEL: John 1:1-14**

*The prologue to the Gospel of John describes Jesus as the Word of God made flesh, the one who reveals God to be "full of grace and truth."*

**P The holy gospel according to John.**

C Glory to you, O Lord.

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

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

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

14 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.

**P The gospel of the Lord.**

C Praise to you, O Christ.

HOMILY

Rev. Larry Hawkins

\*NICENE CREED

ELW p. 104

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the scriptures;

he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,\*  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## \*PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A Empowered by the news of Christ's birth, let us pray boldly for the church, creation, and all who are in need.

### *A brief silence*

The Word becomes flesh and dwells among us, bringing life, love, and joy to a weary world. Gracious God, use our lips and our lives to proclaim the good news of your coming.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

The earth rejoices and the coastlands are glad on the day of your birth. Bring life to barren wastelands, healing where we have caused harm, and bold hearts to respond to creation's call for justice. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Righteousness and justice are your foundation, O Holy One. Fill world leaders with your zeal for righteousness and your love for any who are marginalized and oppressed, especially immigrants, refugees and others who are displaced.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

The heavens proclaim your glory and announce that we have been made your own people. Keep watch over all who are spending this holy day alone, alienated, or ill, especially *Don Alsedek, Connie Barner, Rachael Benkovic, Elijah Dean, Duck Harris, Rose Hoover, Samson Kennedy, Bernie Kunz, Rob Lipsitt, and Jeff Myers.*

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Light dawns for the righteous and joy visits the upright in heart. Fortify us with your grace and fill us with zeal to proclaim the news of your birth to those who long for love.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

From the nurturing darkness of the womb to the tender night of the tomb, you enfold us in your love. We remember with affection those who have died and now rest in your eternal embrace. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

**P With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Savior.**

C Amen.

\*PEACE

**P The peace of Christ be with you always.**

C And also with you.

### **The Meal**

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

\*OFFERTORY HYMN Angels We Have Heard on High ELW #289  
vs. 2&3

\*OFFERTORY PRAYER

A God of glory, great are your wonders among us and many are the blessings you bestow. Use us and these your gifts for the needs of the world, that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in your saving grace, through Christ our Savior.

**C Amen**

\*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

ELW p.190

**P The Lord be with you.**

C And also with you.

**P Lift up your hearts.**

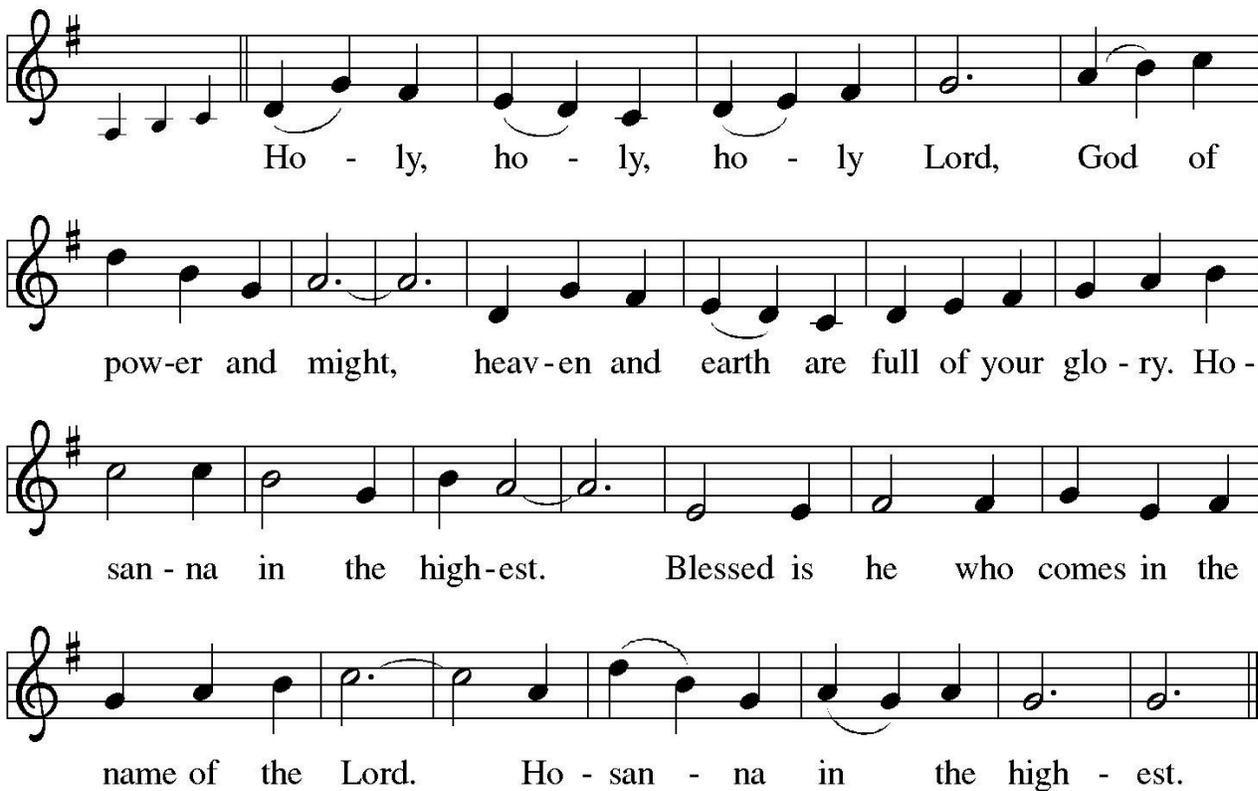
C We lift them to the Lord.

**P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.**

C It is right to give our thanks and praise.

\*PREFACE

**P** It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory, that, beholding the God made visible, we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of  
pow-er and might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -  
san - na in the high-est. Blessed is he who comes in the  
name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

**\*EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

**P Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:  
Blessed are you for the birth of creation.  
Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.  
Blessed are you for your promise to your people.  
Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.  
Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.  
Blessed are you for your Son Jesus,  
the Word made flesh.**

***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.***

**Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:**

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

**With this bread and cup**

**we remember your Word dwelling among us,  
full of grace and truth.**

**We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.**

**We look with hope for his coming.**

Come, Lord Jesus.

**Holy God, we long for your Spirit.  
Come among us.  
Bless this meal.  
May your Word take flesh in us.  
Awaken your people.  
Fill us with your light.  
Bring the gift of peace on earth.  
Come, Holy Spirit.**

**All praise and glory are yours,  
Holy One of Israel,  
Word of God incarnate,  
Power of the Most High,  
one God, now and forever.  
C Amen.**

\*THE LORD'S PRAYER

ELW p.191

**P Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.**

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.

\*SHARING THE MEAL

**P God is now in flesh appearing. Come to the feast of joy!**

COMMUNION HYMNS:

What Child Is This

ELW #296

Hark The Herald Angels Sing

ELW #270

**The Sending**

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

\*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A Incarnate God, you are among us at this table. May we treasure this gift and ponder in our hearts the mystery of your presence. Move us to discover the wonders of your love in the everyday moments of our lives, through Christ born in us.

**C Amen.**

\*BLESSING

**P The triune God, glorious Mystery, holy Incarnate One, abiding Comforter, ✠ bless you with endless grace, peace, and joy.**

C Amen.

\*SENDING HYMN Good Christians Friends, Rejoice ELW #288

\*DISMISSAL

A Glory to God in the Highest !

**C And peace to God's people on earth!**

A Go in Joy. Embody God's redeeming grace.

**C Thanks be to God**

POSTLUDE

Arthur Berg

***Thank you, Rev. Larry Hawkins for presiding over worship.  
You are a blessing to us.***

***We appreciate Arthur Berg for sharing her musical talent with  
us this morning. Thank you, Arthur.***

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**Prelude** - Arthur Berg

**Gathering Hymn** - "Joy to the World" ELW #267 PUBLIC DOMAIN ANTIOCH words - Isaac Watts music - 18th c. English melody

**Gospel Acclamation** - "Angels We Have Heard on High" ELW #289 (vs. 1) PUBLIC DOMAIN words & music - 19th c. French Carol

**Offertory Hymn** - "Angels We Have Heard on High" ELW #289 (vs. 2 & 3) PUBLIC DOMAIN words & music - 19th c. French Carol

**Sanctus** - "Holy, Holy, Holy", p.108, ELW, setting 1

**Distribution of Communion** - "What Child Is This" ELW #296 PUBLIC DOMAIN GREENSLEEVES words - Wm. C. Dix music - 16th c. English Ballad

"Hark the Herald Angels Sing" ELW #270 PUBLIC DOMAIN words - Charles Wesley music - Felix Mendelssohn

**Sending hymn** - "Good Christian Friends Rejoice" ELW #288 PUBLIC DOMAIN IN DULCI JUBILO

**Postlude** - Arthur Berg

### **St. Peter's Lutheran Church Highspire Contact Information:**

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### **ALTAR FLOWERS**

We are in need of sponsors for the altar flowers on the following Sunday's:

January 18th, 2026

If you would be interested, please reach out to Helene Hoch at 717-343-8397. Thank you!

## **Worship Participants for Christmas Day December 25, 2025**

Presiding Minister	Rev, Larry Hawkins
Music Director	Stephen Strauss
Musician	Arthur Berg
Worship Assistant	Patrick Hawkins
Lector	Jill Hawkins

## **Worship Participants for December 28, 2025**

Presiding Minister	Sr. Marianne Brock
Music Director	Stephen Strauss
Musician	Juliet Mitton
Worship Assistant	Brian Keyser
Lector	Helene Hoch

## **All are Welcome Bible Study**

The *All are Welcome Bible Study* meets on Tuesday nights at 6:30pm. We are currently reading Psalms. We send out a weekly email with the Zoom link, as well as a brief summary of what we covered the previous week. To get the link for attending the Zoom session, or just to get on the weekly email list, please contact Matt and Mary Hunt at [allarewelcomebiblestudy@gmail.com](mailto:allarewelcomebiblestudy@gmail.com).

## **ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

Mark your calendars for our yearly congregational meeting will be held on Sunday January 25th. Lunch will be provided by our Council with the meeting afterwards. More information to follow.

*Come to church and stay for fellowship every Sunday in the Parlor. Enjoy coffee and snacks and friendly conversation! If you would be interested in "Hosting a Sunday" please check the sign-up sheet posted on the bulletin board located in the hallway outside the Music Room/Church Office.*