



St. Peter's Lutheran Church
Highspire
Christmas Eve
December 24, 2025

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.

Overview

Glory Enough for Everyone

To maintain the machinery of empire, people must be counted; not to be valued as individuals, but to assess tribute. It is the census. Lists of family members, and decisions about them, must be made. As your life, family, and records are audited, so also is your future decided. What sacrifice will be required for the glory of Rome?

If he has listened to Mary's song (Luke 1:46-55), Joseph, as the state-recognized head of the household, can safely allow himself and his family to be among the counted. He would know that Imperial Rome's time is short, that God brings down the "powerful from their thrones" and "sends the rich away empty." Although in temporary bondage, God's people will receive the promises made to Abraham for the sake of his descendants. If Joseph has listened to Mary (Luke 1:32-33) he knows that this son will sit on David's throne, and cannot be removed. He may not understand how and when these things will come to pass, only that they will. Why not be counted?

Shepherds, however, cannot expect to be counted. While the rest of the world is engaged in the games of empire, they watched their flocks, unnoticed by census-takers. But they were not unnoticed by God. Beyond the view of the watchful eye of Caesar, God was doing a new thing, forging true peace to upset the sham pax of imperial domination, a new kingdom whose only army is that of angels singing, rank upon rank, of God's saving work. It all begins with the unforeseen birth of a child and the wonder of a mother. We, like shepherds, stand in awe at God's gracious surprise. There is glory enough for all.

WORDS OF WELCOME

PRELUDE Carol of The Nativity
Emmanuel, El Shaddai

Bell Choir

The Gathering

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

*Lighting & Blessing of the Christmas Tree

P God our creator, we praise you for this Christmas tree, gift of the earth and sign of your evergreen presence. As we illumine this tree, let your blessing come upon us. Send us your Son, the tender branch of Jesse, who brings us light and life. May we who stand in its light eagerly welcome the true Light that never fades. All glory be yours now and forever.

C Amen.

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN O Come All Ye Faithful

ELW#283

*CALL TO WORSHIP

P The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who lived in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders, thou hast broken in pieces O God, our renewer.

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

P 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.

C Amen.

The Word

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

First 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!

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.

3 You have multiplied exultation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

4 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.

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.

7 Great will be his authority,
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.

L The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 96

(read responsively)

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad. (Ps. 96:11)

1 Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.

**2 Sing to the Lord, bless the name of the Lord;
proclaim God's salvation from day to day.**

3 Declare God's glory among the nations
and God's wonders among all peoples.

**4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised,
more to be feared than all gods.**

5 As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols;
but you, O Lord, have made the heavens.

**6 Majesty and magnificence are in your presence;
power and splendor are in your sanctuary.**

7 Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples,
ascribe to the Lord honor and power.

**8 Ascribe to the Lord the honor due the holy name;
bring offerings and enter the courts of the Lord.**

9 Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
tremble before the Lord, all the earth.

**10 Tell it out among the nations: "The Lord is king!
The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be
moved will judge the peoples with equity."**

11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful
and all that is therein.

**12 Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your
coming, O Lord, for you come to judge the earth.**

13 You will judge the world with righteousness
and the peoples with your truth.

Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14

The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.

11 The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, 12 training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. 14 He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

L The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

*GOSPEL PROCESSION Gloria vs. 1

Choir

***GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-14[15-20]**

P The holy gospel according to Luke.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

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.

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. 7 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 in the guest room.

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.]

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

*GOSPEL RECESSIO

Gloria vs. 2

Choir

HOMILY

Rev. Larry Hawkins

*HYMN OF THE DAY

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

ELW#270

*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.

Gathering God, you bring your people from every corner of the earth together before the manger that you have made a throne. Unite the church in love as we rejoice in the news of your coming. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creating God, you brought forth the earth and all that is in it. Join our voices with the roaring seas, the exulting fields, and the trees of the forest singing for joy on this holy night. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Transforming God, the world trembles amid violence and war. Empower our hands, feet, and hearts with your Spirit to shatter the rod of the oppressor and turn swords into plowshares especially in Ukraine, Israel, Palestine, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and all places of conflict. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Shepherding God, you lead us to your love in the face of our neighbor. Send us into the world to find your Word made flesh in one another, especially those who are sick or struggling especially *Don Alsedek, Connie Barner, Rachael Benkovic, Elijah Dean, Duck Harris, Rose Hoover, Samson Kennedy, Bernie Kunz, Rob Lipsitt, and Jeff Myers.* God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Nurturing God, you dwell with us in humble places. Sustain housing and clothing ministries in this community, that all find shelter and warmth. We pray especially for youth seeking safety and care. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Abiding God, you remain at the side of all the departed. Grant all who mourn hope in the resurrection and peace in Christ Jesus. 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.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Carol of The Bells

Bell Choir

The Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

*OFFERTORY HYMN In The Bleak Midwinter

ELW #294
(v. 1 & 3)

1 In the bleak mid-winter, frost-y wind made moan,
2 Heav-en can-not hold him, nor . . . earth sus-tain;
3 What . . . can I give him, poor . . . as I am?

earth stood hard as i-ron, wa-ter like a stone;
heav'n and earth shall flee a-way when he comes to reign;
If I were a shep-herd I would bring a lamb;

snow had fall - en, snow on snow, snow on snow,
 in the bleak mid - win - ter a sta - ble place suf - ficed
 if I were a wise . . . man I would do my part;

in the bleak mid - win - ter, long a - go.
 the Lord . . . God al - might - y, Je - sus Christ.
 yet what I can I give him— give my heart.

***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.107

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

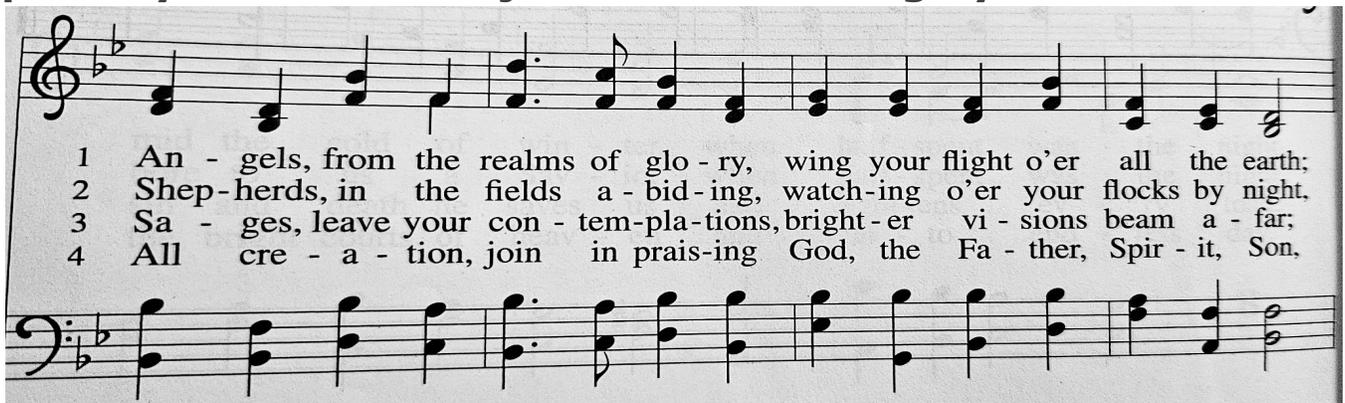
C We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

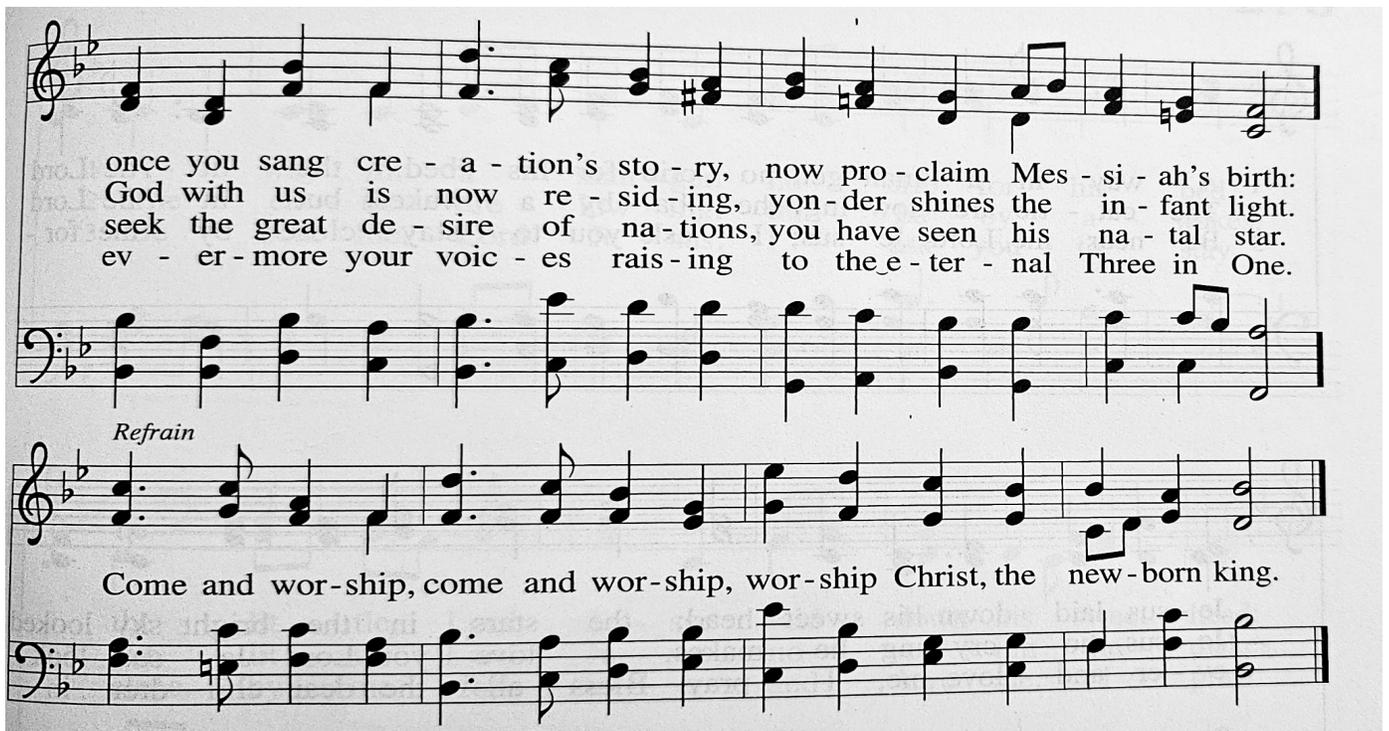
C It is right to give our thanks and praise.

*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. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. 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:



1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
2 Shep - herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your flocks by night,
3 Sa - ges, leave your con - tem - pla - tions, bright - er vi - sions beam a - far;
4 All cre - a - tion, join in prais - ing God, the Fa - ther, Spir - it, Son,



once you sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry, now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
God with us is now re - sid - ing, yon - der shines the in - fant light.
seek the great de - sire of na - tions, you have seen his na - tal star.
ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing to the e - ter - nal Three in One.

Refrain

Come and wor - ship, come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born king.

***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.112

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:

Away In a Manger

ELW #277

O Little Town of Bethlehem

ELW #279

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.

*THE CANDLE LIGHTING

*ANTHEM

All Is Well

Choir

*HYMN

Silent Night

ELW #281

*BLESSING

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

C Amen.

*SENDING HYMN Go Tell It on the Mountain!

ELW #290

*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

Juliet Mitton

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

***We appreciate Juliet Mitton for sharing her musical talent with
us. Thank you, Juliet.***

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Prelude - "Carols of the Nativity" arr. Dan R. Edwards @2003 Harold Flammer Music, Shawnee Press Bell Choir
"Emmanuel, El Shaddai" arr. Sondra Tucker @2024 Word Music Bell Choir

Processional Hymn - "O Come All Ye Faithful" ELW #283 PUBLIC DOMAIN ADESTES FIDELES words & music - John Francis Wade

Gospel Processional - "Gloria" vs. 1 - Michael W. Smith arr. Bruce Greer @1989 O'Ryan Music Choir

Gospel Recessional - "Gloria" vs. 2 - Michael W. Smith arr. Bruce Greer @1989 O'Ryan Music Choir

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

Special Music - "Carol of the Bells" arr. Douglas E. Wagner @1983 Agape, Hope Publishing Bell Choir

Offertory Hymn - "In the Bleak Midwinter" ELW #294 (vs.1 & 3) PUBLIC DOMAIN words - Christina Rossetti music - Gustav Holst

Praise Hymn - "Angels from the Realms of Glory" ELW #275 (vs. 4) PUBLIC DOMAIN words- James Montgomery music - Henry Smart

Communion Hymns - "Away in the Manger" ELW #277 PUBLIC DOMAIN words - 19th c. North American music - James R. Murray

"O Little Town of Bethlehem" ELW #279 PUBLIC DOMAIN ST. LOUIS words - Phillips Brooks music - Lewis H. Redner

Anthem - "All Is Well" - Michael W. Smith arr. Bruce Greer @ 1989 O'Ryan Music Choir

Hymn - "Silent Night" ELW #281 PUBLIC DOMAIN words - Joseph Mohr music - Franz Gruber

Recessional Hymn - "Go Tell It on the Mountain" ELW #290 PUBLIC DOMAIN words & music - African American Spiritual

Postlude - Juliet Mitton

St. Peter's Lutheran Church Highspire Contact Information:

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For pastoral care, please reach out to the church office at 717-939-3492 or by email at stpetershighspire240@gmail.com. You can also call Rich Deutsch at 717-512-1136.

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!

The white poinsettia altar flowers are presented to the Glory of God by Sally in loving memory of her husband, Henry Schonewolf.

Worship Participants for Christmas Eve December 24, 2025

Presiding Minister	Rev. Larry Hawkins
Music Director	Stephen Strauss
Musician	Juliet Mitton
Worship Assistant	Sally Schonewolf
Lector	Grace Hoover

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

CHOIR REHEARSALS

There will be no rehearsals this Wednesday, December 24th, as we will be Celebrating Christmas Eve! The next Wednesday rehearsal will be January 7, 2026 for the Bell Choir at 6:30pm and Choir at 7:15pm. Join us at rehearsals and offer your talents to the Lord through music! Any questions, call or text Steve at 717-265-6854.

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.

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.