



St. Peter's Lutheran Church
Highspire
Christmas 1
December 28, 2025

Introduction

As we celebrate the Twelve Days of Christmas, our gospel today confronts us with the death of innocent children at the hands of Herod. The birth of Christ does not remove the power of evil from our world, but its light gives us hope as we walk with all the "holy innocents" of past generations and today who have suffered unjustly. In our gathering around word and meal, God continues to redeem us, lift us up, and carry us as in days of old.

Overview

Joy and Sorrow at Christmas

The joy-filled carols of Christmas still seem to echo in the nave as the assembly gathers for worship. There is praise of God in the psalm this day as the psalmist sings of the Lord present in all creation even as the same creation reveals a Creator worthy of praise. Still, our joy is not complete for sin continues, even in these days. Herod, bent on destroying Jesus, orders the murders of the youngest children of Bethlehem. Even today the distress present in a dangerous and unjust human society presses in. Human sin severs our relationships with God and one another.

In the midst of our distress, Jesus comes in flesh and blood and is proclaimed in today's readings to be fully human, and even vulnerable, just as we are. Yet the Christ child also is Lord and Savior. Even while Herod plots, God makes a way to use this for good. Guiding Joseph by dreams, Jesus and his family are saved and the words of Hosea 11:1 are fulfilled. In this way we are reminded once more this is no ordinary child, this is the Christ child, the Messiah, the one sent to save and redeem a broken and sinful humanity.

Once more we discover God does not simply fix our lives, removing all obstacles and difficulties. Instead, God uses the harsh realities of life as opportunities for the gospel to be proclaimed, hope to triumph, and grace to shine forth. This is Jesus, our Emmanuel, God with us, when we flee to Egypt and as we return to dwell in Nazareth.

WORDS OF WELCOME

PRELUDE Carol of the Bells Bell Choir

The Gathering

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

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN Once in Royal David's City ELW #269

*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 O Lord God, you know that we cannot place our trust in our own powers. As you protected the infant Jesus, so defend us and all the needy from harm and adversity, through 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.

Isaiah 9:2-7

HYMN Lo, How a Rose is E'er Blooming (vs.1) ELW# 272

Micah 5:2-5a

HYMN O Little Town of Bethlehem (vs. 1 &2) ELW# 279

Luke 1 26-35,38

ANTHEM Welcome to Our World Choir

Luke 2:1-7

HYMN Infant Holy, Infant Lowly ELW# 276

Luke 2:8-16

ANTHEM All Is Well Choir

Luke 2:22-40

HYMN Jesus, What A Wonderful Child (2 times) ELW# 297

Matthew 2:1-11

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION The First Noel (vs.1,3 & 5) ELW# 300

***GOSPEL: Matthew 2:13-23**

P The holy gospel according to Matthew.

C **Glory to you, O Lord.**

In a dream, Joseph is warned to flee to Egypt to protect the infant Jesus from the jealousy of Herod.

13 Now after [the magi] had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." 14 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

16 When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. 17 Then what had been

spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

18 "A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;

she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."

19 When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 20 "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." 21 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. 23 There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazarene."

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

HOMILY

Sr. Marianne Brock

*HYMN OF THE DAY Angels From the Realms of Glory ELW# 275

John 1: 1-14

HYMN

Love Has Come

ELW# 292

*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.

God of grace, you show us mercy not according to our worthiness, but according to the abundance of your steadfast love. Grant us the courage to go into the world and do likewise.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of abundance, the sun and moon praise you and the shining stars sing of your love. Where we have desecrated your creation, make us into a healing balm for what we have broken.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of righteousness, when leaders fail to fulfill their calls to enact justice, you suffer alongside us. Propel those in power to see you reflected in the faces of all they serve.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of life, you claim us as your own and care for us as Christ's siblings. Pour out your compassion in every place your people suffer, and protect them in the palm of your hand. We pray especially for *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.**

God of compassion, you nurture children as the apple of your eye. As you sheltered your son Jesus from Herod's grasp, shelter all children in danger. As you comforted Rachel, comfort all who have lost children to violence. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of love, you console those who weep for lost beloved ones. Even as we mourn, we offer thanks for those who have gone before us, trusting in your comfort and protection.
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

ELW p. 189

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C And also with you.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Gloria

Choir

The Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

*OFFERTORY HYMN Go Tell it on the Mountain (vs. 1) ELW# 290

Go tell it on the moun - tain, o-ver the hills and ev - 'ry - where;
go tell it on the moun - tain that Je - sus Christ is born!

1 While shep-herds kept their watch-ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,
2 The shep-herds feared and trem-bled when, lo, a - bove the earth
3 Down in a lone - ly man - ger the hum - ble Christ was born;

Refrain
be - hold, through-out the heav-ens there shone a ho - ly light.
rang out the an - gel cho - rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.
and God sent us sal - va - tion that bless-ed Christ-mas morn.

*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.

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.

***EUCHARISTIC 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:

Lamb of God

ELW p.112

Angels We Have Heard on High

ELW #289

Away In A Manger

ELW #278

The Sending

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

*BLESSING

P The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you
and keep you in his grace.

C Amen.

*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.

*BENEDICTION

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

*SENDING HYMN

Joy to the World!

ELW #267

*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, Sr. Marianne Brock for presiding over worship today, you are a blessing to us.

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

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

Processional hymn - "Once in Royal David's City" ELW #269
PUBLIC DOMAIN IRBY words - Cecil Alexander music -
Henry J. Gauntlett

Hymn - "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" ELW #272 (v. 1) PUBLIC
DOMAIN words - 15th c. German carol music - Praetorius

Hymn - "O Little Town of Bethlehem" ELW #279 (v. 1 & 2) PUBLIC
DOMAIN ST LOUIS words - P. Brooks music - L. Redner

Anthem - "Welcome to Our World" Chris Rice arr. Jack Schrader @2002
Word Music CCLI Song# 2317391 Choir

Hymn - "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" ELW #276 PUBLIC DOMAIN
Polish Carol @ arr. 1978 LBW, Augsburg Fortress

Anthem - "All Is Well" Michael W. Smith arr. Bruce Greer @1989
O'Ryan Music CCLI Song# 355008 Choir

Hymn - "Jesus What a Wonderful Child" ELW #297 (2 times)
PUBLIC DOMAIN arr. @1992 Pilgrim Press

Hymn - "The First Noel" ELW #300 (v. 1, 3 & 5) PUBLIC DOMAIN
English traditional arr. John Stainer

Hymn - "Angels from the Realm of Glory" ELW #275 PUBLIC
DOMAIN REGENT SQUARE

Hymn - "Love Has Come" ELW #292 UN FLAMBEAU CCLI Song# 2060820

Special Music - "Gloria" Michael W. Smith arr. Bruce Greer @1989
O'Ryan Music CCLI Song# 355046 Choir

Offertory Hymn - "Go Tell It on the Mountain" ELW #290 (v. 1)
PUBLIC DOMAIN African American Spiritual

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

Communion of the Faithful (3) - Lamb of God p.112 ELW setting 1
"Angels We Have Heard on High" ELW #289 PUBLIC DOMAIN
French Carol

"Away in the Manger" ELW #278 PUBLIC DOMAIN CRADLE SONG

Sending hymn - "Joy to the World" ELW #267 PUBLIC DOMAIN
ANTIOCH

Postlude - Juliet Mitton

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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!

Altar vases are presented to the Glory of God by Nancy Wilson in honor of her daughter, Janine Smith's birthday on December 30th.

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

Worship Participants for January 4, 2026

Presiding Minister	Rev. Larry Hawkins
Music Director	Stephen Strauss
Musician	Grady Daub
Worship Assistant	Sally Schonewolf
Lector	Mary Hunt

CHOIR REHEARSALS

There will be no rehearsals this Wednesday, December 31st, New Year's 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 calendar for our Annual Congregational Meeting to be held on January 25th, 2026. There will be lunch provided by Council with the meeting to follow. More information to come. Also, any committee reports should be submitted to church secretaries by January 16, 2026.

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.