

**SAINT THOMAS LUTHERAN CHURCH  
NATIVITY OF OUR LORD  
CHRISTMAS EVE, DECEMBER 24, 2023**

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.

**GATHERING**

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Amen**

***Oh Come All Ye Faithful (ELW 283)***

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!

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God,  
the Word made flesh,  
our life and our salvation.

**Amen.**

Trusting the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior,  
let us confess our sin.

God of life,

**you promise good news of great joy for all people,  
and call us to be messengers of your peace.  
We confess that too often we hoard our joy,  
our resources, and our security.  
We nurture conflict and build barriers.  
We neglect the needs of our neighbors  
and ignore the groaning of creation.  
Have mercy on us.  
Where we are self-centered, open our hearts.  
Where we are reluctant, give us courage.  
Where we are cynical, restore our trust.  
Renew us with your grace  
and give us again the hope of eternal life in you.  
Amen.**

Hear the good news:  
We are children of God and heirs of God's promises  
through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.  
In † Jesus we are forgiven and redeemed.  
Sing with joy, for all the ends of the earth  
shall know the salvation of God.  
**Amen.**

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

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.  
**Amen.**

### ***Lo, How a Rose is Growing (ELW 272)***

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming  
from tender stem hath sprung!  
Of Jesse's lineage coming  
as seers of old have sung,  
it came, a flow'r so bright,  
amid the cold of winter,

when half-spent was the night.

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:2-7**

<sup>2</sup>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.

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

<sup>4</sup>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.

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

<sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>7</sup>His authority shall grow continually,  
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.

***It Came Upon a Midnight Clear (ELW 282)***

It came upon the midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth  
to touch their harps of gold:

"Peace on the earth, good will to all,  
from heav'n's all-gracious king."  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
to hear the angels sing.

## PSALM: Psalm 96

- <sup>1</sup>Sing to the LORD<sup>1</sup> a new song;  
sing to the LORD,<sup>1</sup> all the earth.
- <sup>2</sup>**Sing to the LORD, bless the name<sup>1</sup> of the LORD;  
proclaim God's salvation from<sup>1</sup> day to day.**
- <sup>3</sup>Declare God's glory a-<sup>1</sup>mong the nations  
and God's wonders a-<sup>1</sup>mong all peoples.
- <sup>4</sup>**For great is the LORD and greatly<sup>1</sup> to be praised,  
more to be feared<sup>1</sup> than all gods. R**
- <sup>5</sup>As for all the gods of the nations, they<sup>1</sup> are but idols;  
but you, O LORD, have<sup>1</sup> made the heavens.
- <sup>6</sup>**Majesty and magnificence are<sup>1</sup> in your presence;  
power and splendor are in your<sup>1</sup> sanctuary.**
- <sup>7</sup>Ascribe to the LORD, you families<sup>1</sup> of the peoples,  
ascribe to the LORD hon-<sup>1</sup>or and power.
- <sup>8</sup>**Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the<sup>1</sup> holy name;  
bring offerings and enter the courts<sup>1</sup> of the LORD. R**
- <sup>9</sup>Worship the LORD in the beau-<sup>1</sup>ty of holiness;  
tremble before the LORD,<sup>1</sup> all the earth.
- <sup>10</sup>**Tell it out among the nations: "The<sup>1</sup> LORD is king!  
The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will judge  
the peo-<sup>1</sup>ples with equity."**
- <sup>11</sup>Let the heavens rejoice, and let the<sup>1</sup> earth be glad;  
let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that<sup>1</sup> is  
therein.
- <sup>12</sup>**Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your com-<sup>1</sup>ing, O  
LORD,  
for you come to<sup>1</sup> judge the earth.**
- <sup>13</sup>You will judge the<sup>1</sup> world with righteousness  
and the peoples<sup>1</sup> with your truth. R

## *Joy to the World (ELW 267)*

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.

## **SECOND READING: Titus 2:11-14**

<sup>11</sup>The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, <sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup>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.

### ***Of the Father's Love Begotten (ELW 295)***

Of the Father's love begotten  
ere the worlds began to be,  
he is Alpha and Omega,  
he the source, the ending he,  
of the things that are, that have been,  
and that future years shall see,  
evermore and evermore.

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*Alleluia.* I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

*Alleluia. (Luke 2:10-11)*

### ***Hark the Herald Angel's 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!"

*Refrain*

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

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

<sup>1</sup>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.

***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.

<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!"

***Angels We Have Heard on High (ELW 289)***

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.

<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.

**REFLECTION – Pastor Mary Metzger**

***What Child Is This (ELW 296)***

What child is this, who, laid to rest,  
on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet  
while shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the king,  
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
haste, haste to bring him laud,  
the babe, the son of Mary!

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Trusting in God's good news of great joy for all people, we offer our prayers for ourselves, our neighbors, and the world God loves.

Glory to you, God, for the song of the angels, proclaiming to the world Christ's holy birth. Give your church a joyful song to sing, that we bring the good news of peace and salvation to all people. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Glory to you, God, for the stars that shine in the depth of the night. Provoke awe in our hearts at the expansive mystery of the cosmos. Open us to find beauty in the clear darkness of night and in the first glimmers of dawn. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Glory to you, God, for the child born to us who establishes a kingdom of justice and righteousness. Break bonds of oppression, bring reconciliation to warring lands, and establish peace from this time onward and forevermore. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Glory to you, God, for Mary's loving care. Lead us to tend to one another in time of need. Share the comfort of your presence with all people tonight who are alone or separated from loved ones due to estrangement, incarceration, or illness (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Glory to you, God, for the faithfulness of the shepherds in their vocation. Grant rest to any who feel exhausted from their work during this season: retail and restaurant workers, church musicians, administrative staff, and clergy, organizers of charitable-giving events, and service workers doing essential tasks. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Glory to you, God, for the multitude of the heavenly host. We rejoice in the zeal of all your saints (*especially*) who have witnessed the appearing of your grace, and who reveal to us your salvation for all. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace.

**Amen.**

### ***Go Tell It on the Mountain (ELW 290)***

#### *Refrain*

Go tell it on the mountain,  
over the hills and ev'rywhere;  
go tell it on the mountain  
that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching



o'er silent flocks by night,  
behold, throughout the heavens  
there shone a holy light. *Refrain*

## **OFFERING**

### **OFFERING PRAYER**

God of abundance,  
receive and bless these gifts we have offered.  
Join our hearts with the song of the angels  
and gather us at your table of celebration.  
Strengthen us to share with all the world  
the abundance of your grace upon grace,  
poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.  
**Amen.**

### ***The First Noel (ELW 300)***

The first Noel the angel did say  
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,  
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

### *Refrain*

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel!  
Born is the King of Israel.

## **GREAT THANKSGIVING**

### **DIALOGUE**

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.**

## **PREFACE**

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:

### **HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (ELW 207)**

Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heav'n and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.

### **THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

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.  
**Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Glory to God in the highest!  
Come to the table of peace.

## COMMUNION

The body of Christ, given for you.  
The blood of Christ, shed for you.  
Amen.

### *Away in the 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.

### *Once in Royal David's City (ELW 269)*

Once in royal David's city  
stood a lowly cattle shed,  
where a mother laid her baby  
in a manger for his bed:  
Mary was that mother mild,  
Jesus Christ, her little child.

### *Mary Did You Know – Lloyd Risser, Soloist*

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God our redeemer,  
you have fed us at this table  
with gifts of grace, truth, and life.  
As you have gathered us in joy,  
send us forth as messengers of your peace.  
Make us shine with the good news of your glory,  
born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
**Amen.**

## BLESSING

God bless you and keep you,  
+ Jesus grant you grace and truth,  
and the Spirit send peace upon your hearts,  
now and forever.  
**Amen.**

**\*Candles will be lighted throughout the congregation as we sing “*Silent Night*.” Please always hold the lighted candles upright. Tilt unlighted candles toward lighted ones to pass on the light.**

### ***Silent Night* (ELW 281)**

- Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht!*  
*Alles schläft, einsam wacht*  
*nur das traute, hochheilige Paar.*  
*Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,*  
*Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh,*  
*Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh.*
- 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.

- 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!  
Christ, the Savior, is born!
- 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,  
Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

## **DISMISSAL**

**\*Candles may be extinguished at this time.**

Christ the Savior is born!  
Go in peace. Rejoice, proclaim the good news!  
**Thanks be to God.**

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