



3 & 7 PM

December 24, 2025

CHRISTMAS EVE



CONNECT CARDS

Guests and members, please:

- ♦ fill out a Connect card, or
- ♦ scan the QR code to connect with us online

Cards are in the pew racks in front of you. These methods include a space to share prayer requests with our pastors.

We look forward to praying for and connecting personally with YOU!

Serving Tonight...

Message:
Pastor Brad Stoltenow

Liturgist:
Pastor Ben Oesch

Musicians:
Gail Black, organ
Brad Gillund, piano
Shepherd's Chorale



Immanuel ~ God-With-Us!

✠ IN THE NAME OF JESUS ✠

RINGING OF THE BELL ~ CALL TO WORSHIP *Please quiet voices as we prepare to worship.*

LIGHTING OF THE WREATH CANDLES

Candles remind us Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, came to conquer sin's darkness and to lead us into the light of His glorious Kingdom. The colors also have significance: blue is for hope; pink is for joy; white is for CHRISTmas morning: the purity of God, coming as the Christ Child.

May God's Spirit warm our hearts and homes as we celebrate the birth of Jesus! Joy to the world!

PRELUDE

WELCOME

HYMN # 379:1-3 "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

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!

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, glory in the highest: *Refrain:*

INVOCATION

Matthew 28:19b

Pastor (P): We call on the name of the Triune God—the name into which we have been baptized: In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation (C): Amen!

CONFESSION OF SINS

Isaiah 9:2; 2 Corinthians 4:6

P: The people who walk in the darkness of sin have seen a great light;

C: those who dwell in a land of deep darkness, on them has The Light of the world shined.

(silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination)

P: God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Let us confess our sins to the Him:

C: Dear Lord, we gather this night to celebrate the birth of the One who brings us peace. Yet, we are not always at peace with You, with one another, or with ourselves. Our sinful nature rebels against Your loving laws. Our selfishness puts our desires before the needs of others. Our sinfulness can cause us to be fearful or despairing. For the sake of Jesus, whom You gave to this earth to redeem and restore us in Your love, forgive us. Renew in us a joyful desire to follow You, Lord, and to gather others into Your family.

ABSOLUTION ~ FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Luke 2:10, 14; John 3:16, 20:19-23

P: The angel said to the shepherds, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people." As God's servant, I say to you, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy. God so loved us all that He sent His only Son to rescue us, that all who believe in Him will receive eternal life!" As a called and ordained servant of Christ and with His authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

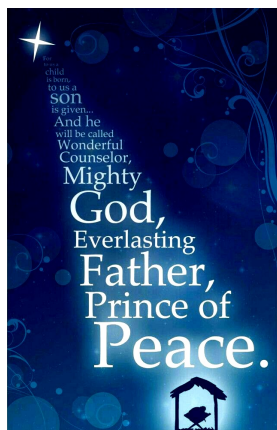
C: Amen!

P: With the angels, we proclaim:

ALL: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"

CHOIR ANTHEM Rejoice and Be Merry

*Rejoice and be merry in songs of great worth! O praise our Redeemer, all mortals on earth!
For this is the birthday of Jesus our King, who brought us salvation—His praises we'll sing!
A heavenly vision appeared in the sky; vast numbers of angels the shepherds did spy,
Proclaiming the birthday of Jesus our King, who brought us salvation—His praises we'll sing!
So blessed for ever be Jesus our King, who brought us salvation—His praises we'll sing!*



Old Testament Reading: Before Immanuel (Jesus) became a Christmas comfort, He was God's miraculous answer to a fearful and unbelieving king. The Lord sent the prophet Isaiah to confront King Ahaz and to call him to trust the Lord. Ahaz was a king in the family line of King David, which was also the family line of Jesus.

Sheol: the realm of the dead

Epistle Reading: Because of sin, a sacrifice must be made to restore the relationship between God and humanity. The Father sent His Son, Jesus, to be the propitiation—the sacrifice that would pay for our sins. He became our substitute and assumed our debts. As true man, Jesus took our place on the cross and His Father placed the sins of the entire world on Him. As true God, Jesus lived a perfect life in our place; therefore, His sacrifice on the cross was sufficient to satisfy God's justice on behalf of all humanity. What a gift God has given to us in Jesus!

SALUTATION AND PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

P: The Lord be with you!

C: **And also with you!**

P: We pray: O God, You make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that as we joyfully receive Him as our Redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold Him when He comes again on the Last Day; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen!**

GUESTS AND MEMBERS CONNECT *Let's get to know each other better!*

Please fill out the Connect Card, either by hand or with the QR code. Thank you!

+ Children's Bulletins are available on the usher stands as you enter the sanctuary. +



OFFERING *For giving options: ShepherdHillsChurch.org/Give*

VOLUNTARY: CHOIR ANTHEM As it Fell upon a Night

As it fell upon a night in the winter weather, angels bright in starry height began to sing together:

"Unto you a Child is born in a manger lowly. Humble He, yet born to be the King of Love most holy.

In a manger now He lies on and as before Him; all the world at last shall come to worship and adore Him."

Happy angels from afar, cease your singing never!

"In excelsis gloria!" Forever and forever!

PRAYER

OLD TESTAMENT READING Isaiah 7:10-14

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask and I will not put the LORD to the test." And Isaiah said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

RESPONSE

A: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God!**

HYMN RESPONSE # 361:1, 3 & 4 "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

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.

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is giv'n!

So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heav'n.

No ear may hear His coming; but in this world of sin,

Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in.

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;

O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!

EPISTLE READING 1 John 4:7-16

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest [revealed] among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

RESPONSE

A: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God!**

HYMN RESPONSE # 387:1 & 4 "Joy to the World"

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.

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love, and wonders, wonders of His love!

ACCLAMATION

A: The Holy Gospel, according to St. Matthew, the 1st chapter.

C: **Glory to You, O Lord!**

THE HOLY GOSPEL Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called His name Jesus.

RESPONSE

A: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to You, O Christ!**

HYMN # 360 "All My Heart Again Rejoices"

Please note: Stanza 4 is sung by the choir.

MESSAGE "This Is How God Showed Us His Love" 1 John 4:7-16

HYMN RESPONSE # 364:1 & 3 "Away in a Manger"

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care, and take us to heaven to live with Thee there.

Please stand.

STATEMENT OF FAITH ~ THE APOSTLES' CREED

ALL: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life ✠ everlasting. Amen!

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

1 Timothy 2:1-4

In our December prayers, we Pray with an Open Heart for those who are lonely.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4

ALL: 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!

CANDLE LIGHTING

*The sanctuary lights are dimmed. As the CHRISTmas Gospel is read, candles are lit.
Please tip the unlit candle toward the lit candle.*

Joy to the World: This hymn is in the present tense: Jesus is here right now, for you and for me and for all the world, with His truth, grace, righteousness, and most especially with His love!

Gospel Reading: Under the Holy Spirit's inspiration, Matthew's main purpose is to show his Jewish readers that Jesus is their Messiah. He does this primarily by relating how Jesus, in His life and ministry, fulfilled all Old Testament Scriptures. All the Gospels quote the Old Testament; Matthew quotes it the most.

In Jesus' day, being betrothed was a legally binding pledge to be married.

The custom of preparing the manger scene mirrors the act of Christians preparing their hearts for the arrival of Immanuel ~ God with us. On this night, we open our hearts to receive the gift of the Christ Child, born among us. On this first night of the Christmas season, we ourselves become the manger, inviting Christ to dwell within us just as He found rest in that Bethlehem stable.

To you this night is born a child....
He will on you the gifts bestow prepared by God for all below,
that in His kingdom, bright and fair, you may with us His glory share.
Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
prepare a bed, soft, undefiled,
a quiet chamber set apart for You to dwell within my heart.
~Martin Luther, LSB # 358





The greatest Gift ever given wasn't placed under the tree; it was placed on the Tree, and His name is Jesus.

Jesus is God's gift to the world, not just for Christmas, but for every single day your whole life through and even beyond, for all eternity!

LOVE

is an action word.
God loved the world so much that He gave!
~John 3:16-17



In this Divine Service, by faith the Holy Spirit has opened our hearts and minds to receive His graces. We now leave this house of worship to share the love of the Christ Child and HISTORY!

Lord,
lay some soul
upon my heart
and love that soul
through me;
and may I gladly
do my part
to win that soul
for Thee.
Amen!

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HISTORY of CHRISTmas

from Chapter 2 of the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great JOY that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

HYMN # 363 "Silent Night, Holy Night"

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, heavenly 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 Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

BENEDICTION ~ GOD'S GOOD-CREATING WORD OF BLESSING

Numbers 6:24-26

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace.

C: Amen!

*Please extinguish the candle in your hand.
Carry Jesus, the Light of the World, with you in your heart!*

HYMN # 380 "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With th'angelic host proclaim, 'Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain: Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail th'incarnate Deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel! Refrain:

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 man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth. Refrain:

POSTLUDE

✠ TO GOD ALONE ALL GLORY! ✠



*From our Shepherd Family to yours:
We wish you a Blessed CHRISTmas
and a Christ-filled New Year!*