

Ascension Lutheran Church

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Welcome to Worship...

Welcome to all God's guests, including those who call themselves "members" of this church named Ascension Lutheran Church more than 65 years ago.

A special welcome to guests who are here for the first time or who call yourselves "visitors" among the people of this community. It is at God's invitation, through worship, the Holy Spirit calls each of us to come to a place of **community**, **communion** and **commitment**. Each of us brings a different lens to worship, and yet, in a worshiping community, these differences become celebrations of diversity.

Children are always welcome in worship services; However, please know the cry room at the back of the sanctuary is available for parents who need to tend to their little ones.

All Youth and Children in attendance are invited to process the light into the darkness.

Parents may join in assisting the very young if they wish. Please assemble in the narthex (lobby) to receive a tea light for the processional.

Like the iconic figures gathered around the Christ Introduction Child in our nativity scenes, we gather together because we want to know Jesus more as we seek to bring his reign of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love on earth.

Offering of song "Noel"

Catherine & Kamberlynne Washburn

Welcome to Worship

Procession of Light

The Babe

P In 1865, William Chatterton Dix penned a poem that would become the beloved Christmas-time favorite, "What Child is This?"

This year for Advent and Christmas, we have been prompted by this carol to ask deeper questions of Jesus' identity,

"what child IS this?"

When we look beyond the lullaby and behind the scenes, what we discover is that the answers are much more complicated than the lilting lullaby tune conveys.

The time of Jesus' birth was fraught with difficulties.

This is the scene into which Jesus was born.

We are called, as his disciples, to enter the scene in the midst of our own complicated and difficult time in history, offering

Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love as the Christ Child did.

Children's Bell Choir

On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

WA God so loved the world that God became us in order to know us, to love us, even more deeply. Not just the cross at the end of Jesus' life, but the difficulty of the time of Christ's birth can show us the reality of "God-with-us" no matter what. This is a theme from our faith story that can open our hearts to see own place in the narrative of history. our No matter how afraid we are, the Babe "whom shepherds guard and angels sing" lives within us waiting to grow into Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love incarnate. We light this candle of Love for those who need it most. *R1* For all who need more Hope *R2* **R3** For all who yearn for Peace. For all whose Joy lays dormant. *R*4 For all who need the salve of Love. *R1* For all of who need this Child of Possibility. *R2* Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this: *R3* "How do the messages of this child reverberate in our time, In our lives, in our world?" What child IS this? **R4** This, this, is Christ the King

who reigns with hope, peace, joy, and love forever.

Children's Bell Choir

If This, this is Christ, the King, If Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

Prayer for This Day

P Let us pray:

Here, at the nativity of your birth, give us the courage to face this moment with humility and hope.

All Open us to new understandings of
 the unfolding story of your presence among us.
 Show us the true meaning of
 the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.
 We pray in the name of the Child,
 the One Who Reigns in our hearts and lives. Amen.

Offering of song

Children's Bell Choir

Silent Night

Pocket Change Offering (aka Noisy Offering)

Each week our congregation is **led by children** to collect pocket change and small bills. Through this offering, we are reminded that together, the smallest of offerings can change lives and make "hope" tangible.

In recent years, our Noisy Offering has fed 10 children for an entire year through Food for the Poor.

The Noisy Offering has helped families around the world by providing:
4 goats; 2 hens; 12 chicks; 2 piglets; mosquito netting;
honeybees and a vegetable garden.

You've provided a Farmer's Field School, 3 fruit tree seedlings, seeds, and gardening tools.

This year Our Noisy offerings donated \$1200 to LOCAL food banks.
Our Noisy Offering collected throughout these Advent & Christmas seasons
will be given in support of Lutheran Refugee Ministries.

We can't wait to see how the children will choose to share next!

We hear the story

Song — Go Tell it on the Mountain
 ✓

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

Isaiah wrote in a time of occupation and exile of his people. The people were scattered and afraid, feeling alone and despondent. Isaiah speaks what perhaps felt like an impossible prophetic word to remind the people that God is present with them always.

Let us read responsively:

The people walking in darkness have seen a brilliant light — upon those who dwell in a land of deep shadows light is shining!

God, you have made the nation greater — you have brought them abundant joy!

They celebrate in your presence as with the harvest celebrations...

For a child is born to us, an heir is given us, upon whose shoulders dominion will rest.

This One shall be called:

Wonderful Counselor, the Strength of God, Eternal Protector, Champion of Peace.

This dominion, and this peace, will grow without end,

with David's throne and realm sustained with justice and fairness, now and forever.

from Isaiah 9: 2-8

Song — It Came upon the Midnight Clear ✓

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.

Around the time of Elizabeth's pregnancy and John's birth, the emperor in Rome, Caesar Augustus, required everyone in the Roman Empire to participate in a massive census—the first census since Quirinius had become governor of Syria. Each person had to go to his or her ancestral city to be counted.

Mary's fiancé Joseph, from Nazareth in Galilee, had to participate in the census in the same way everyone else did.

Because he was a descendant of King David, his ancestral city was Bethlehem, David's birthplace.

Mary, who was now late in her pregnancy that the messenger Gabriel had predicted, accompanied Joseph.

While in Bethlehem, she went into labor and gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped the baby in a blanket and laid Him in a feeding trough because the inn had no room for them.

Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the child is Lord of all.
Swiftly winging, angels singing, bells are ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the child is Lord of all!
Christ the child is Lord of all!

Nearby, in the fields outside of Bethlehem, a group of shepherds were guarding their flocks from predators in the darkness of night. Suddenly a messenger of the Lord stood in front of them, and the darkness was replaced by a glorious light—the shining light of God 's glory.

They were terrified!

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.

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

Don't be afraid! Listen! I bring good news, news of great joy, news that will affect all people everywhere. Today, in the city of David, a Liberator has been born for you! He is the promised Anointed One, the Supreme Authority! You will know you have found Him when you see a baby, wrapped in a blanket, lying in a feeding trough.

At that moment, the first heavenly messenger was joined by thousands of other messengers—a vast heavenly choir. They praised God.

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains, and the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.

Glo-ria, in excelsis De-o; Glo-ria in excelsis De-o.

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong? What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song? Glo-ria, in excelsis De-o; Glo-ria in excelsis De-o.

As soon as the heavenly messengers disappeared into heaven, the shepherds were buzzing with conversation.

Let 's rush down to Bethlehem right now! Let 's see what 's happening!

Let's experience what the Lord has told us about!

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!

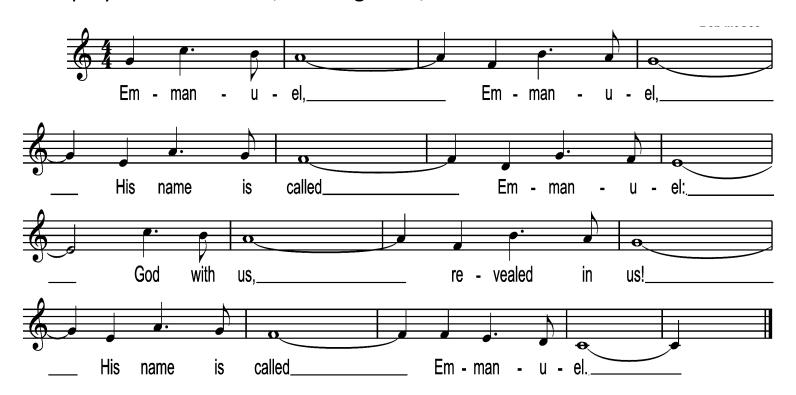
So they ran into town, and eventually they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the manger. After they saw the baby, they spread the story of what they had experienced and what had been said to them about this child. Everyone who heard their story couldn't't stop thinking about its meaning.

Mary, too, pondered all of these events, treasuring each memory in her heart. The shepherds returned to their flocks, praising God for all they had seen and heard, and they glorified God for the way the experience had unfolded just as the heavenly messenger had predicted.

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

Prayers of God's Children

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



(each prayer petition ends with)

L: Hear the voice of your children praying.

All: Make us light for this world you love.

Sharing the Peace of Christ! Please stand in body or spirit.

In our continued physical distancing out of love for the health of one another, we will share the peace of Jesus by "speaking" that peace through sign language.

- Christ become Peace with you. P
- All And also with you.

Offering

Song — Love Has Come Some S

Love has come— a light in the darkness!

Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.

See all heaven has come to proclaim it;

Hear how their song of Joy arises:

Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!

Love! Love! Glory to God on high!

Offertory Prayer

- P God of our waiting and watching,
- All we offer the gifts of our hearts and our lives to
 the service of all your people.
 Prepare the way before us as we meet you in this simple meal,
 through Christ Jesus, our pathway and our light.

The Great Thanksgiving and Words of Institution

- P The Holy One be with you
- All And also with you.
- P Lift up your hearts
- All We lift them up to our God.
- P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God
- All It is right to give our thanks and praise.
- R Here at the Manger of Grace it is right, and good and joyful, on this special night to give thanks to you, creator of heaven and earth.

R
You breathed into us the same breath as the infant Jesus,
the "One Who Walked Among Us,"
Thanks and praise be to You!

R

R

Your intention was for every created thing to have a place, in this world.

A common birth for common people,
healing the sick, feeding the hungry,
and sitting in houses at table with the suffering,
and those who perpetuate suffering,
laying bare complicity and compassion.

P In another house, on another night the night in which he gave himself up for us he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Open our hearts, stripping away any excuse or fearful hesitation, so that we will open our doors to the world as the body of Christ, redeemed by God's love.

The Lord's Prayer

Please stand in body or spirit.

P As we kneel in awe at the manger of Love, let us approach the throne of grace, praying as Jesus taught:

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.

The Invitation

P Come to Christ's banquet. Feast on God's gift of grace.

Note: the communion cups on the periphery of the tray contain red wine while the cups in the center contain white grape juice.

Gluten Free wafers available -ask the communion attendant



Communion Songs

Song — 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 bright sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing; the poor baby wakes, but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

Song — What Child is This ✓

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!

Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?

Good Christian, fear; for sinner here the silent Word is pleading.

Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;

Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe the son of Mary!

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come, peasant, king, to own him.

The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone him.

Raise, raise the song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby;

Joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary!

Song—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.

For Christ is born of Mary, and, gathered all above while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.

O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth, and praises sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!

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; oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!

Post Communion Blessing and Prayer

P The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which you have now received, strengthen you and keep you in His peace.

All Amen

- P Let us pray,
 Thank you Lord, for your gifts of Peace, Hope, Joy and Love.
- All Use them to strengthen us and fill us with your gifts of Grace that far surpass those of the world. Amen

Candle-Lighting—a word of instruction



The light will be brought to the end of each row, tip your unlit candle into the flame of the lighted candle held upright. Pass the light along your row until every candle is lit.

A Reading from John the 1st chapter The Incarnation

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

²He was in the beginning with God.

³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And 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.

John 1:1-14

Silent 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 heav'en-ly peace, sleep in heav-en-ly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight; glories stream from heaven afar, heav'n-ly hosts sing al-le-lu-ia! Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

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.

¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,

Benediction | Please stand in body or spirit.

WA As we've travelled with Joseph and Mary listening in on God's messengers, we've asked the question, What child IS this?

We've discovered this IS God's own son. come to save us and to show us the way,

May the Spirit of Compassion for the weary, lonely and grieving, The Spirit of Provision for the oppressed and homeless, The Spirit of Welcome for the refugee, the outsider those named unclean by the world, be with you to comfort and guide your way.

For Christ is being born within you and among you. In the name of the Creator, + Christ, and Holy Spirit.

All Amen

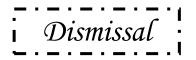
Ρ

Sending Song Extinguish candles

Song - 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!



P Go in peace. Share the gift of love in Jesus.

All Thanks be to God.

Front Cover:

Photos by Worship Design Studio

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